

An American in Latvia and Finland February 2009

Sometimes life has a funny way of asking you if you are awake. The work going on in northern Europe based around Latvia is a real wake up call.

Latvian study day

When we got back from the journey to Turkey we had a small gathering at Duncan's apartment. About 20 people filled the apartment to capacity. We started off showing a slideshow of all of the pictures from the Ukraine bible school and of our new brothers and sisters in Turkey. It never ceases to amaze the joy in our brethrens faces when they see old friends and new friends in pictures and videos. It is an affirmation of a faith that is both alive and living in us all if only we take time to reflect upon it.

The first class we had was on the book of Amos, I led it on how Amos used his occupation as a simple way to express what God wanted him to speak to Israel. The point was brought up about how Jesus would use his occupation as well when he was talking to people, and how we should try to learn from these examples in our daily lives and use things familiar to ourselves and those around us as a way to explain the things of God. Great conversation was had as we looked at the possibilities. After that there was multiple classes on the life of Moses led by our brother Duncan. Using the life of Moses as a rallying cry for our own faith.

A lovely meal was prepared and we all ate together, a wonderful time of fellowship in which many conversations were had. We sang the Russian song again which we learnt at the Ukraine Bible School and talked about the issues that really affect our lives. The brethren here are so keen to learn what is being fed them, eating it up as true spiritual food. It was such a blessing to meet them all!

Photos: Earnest study; whilst Cindy makes Jonah whales with the kids



Eastern Latvia

The day after the Bible day with our brothers and sisters, Brother Duncan and I drove to Eastern Latvia to bring firewood and warm clothes to a brother and sister. The car ride was a good 4+hours each way, the temperature was hovering around -16 degrees celcius. It was bitter cold, the roads were icy, but we were not deterred. The fields and trees all around us had snow all over them, luckily the wind was quite minimal. We even saw wild deer running across the track and fields.

When we arrived at our brother and sisters place we were greeted by a howling dog, wondering why we decided to drive out to the middle of absolute nowhere to meet his owners. Sister Nina came running outside with her husband brother Gennady to greet us as well and keep the "lovely" dog at bay. We were ushered inside, since the time Duncan had informed her we were coming she had been preparing for us. It was amazing the food that she prepared. Here were people who had nothing, willing to share everything they had with us. We sat and ate, they were so proud of the fact that they had visitors and that God had blessed there crops so we could

have some of there food. All of the food was food they had grown as subsistence farmers, except for a bit of ham that they had traded potatoes for from a neighbor earlier in the day.

After the meal, we gave them both new warmer coats, which they promptly put on right away. Sister Nina started praying right away about how thankful she was that God has not forgotten them out here in their frozen land. There was conversation of in the coming months when the snow melts raising some chickens for protein. They don't eat meat because they cannot afford it (yes, the meat that we ate was truly a special treat). After some discussion on how best to raise chickens we sponsored their endeavor.

Sister Nina wanted to show us her storehouse where she keeps all of the food that they have preserved to make it through such cold winters. I saw her potatoes, which she was so proud of. I tasted her pickles and saw her other pickled vegetables. Inside a small damp room, I saw the fruit of their labors. The sustenance of their lives, their prize possessions were the very things that I take for granted more often than not. I thought of my own storehouse at home filled with exotic vegetables from all over, the meat in the freezer and the ease at which I can get food at anytime of the day at the local supermarket. Questions flurried through my mind, questions that I still have today. They were very insistent to load us with their prized preserved vegetables. They were very proud of the fact that although in their 70s, God had given them the strength to still harvest the crops with their own hands. They said they had been blessed with a good harvest last year, thanks to the water pump and irrigation system which Br Steve & Sis Robin Jones [Cindy's parents] had installed on their field.

Photo: The potatoes and preserved vegetables which Nina has to live off for the rest of the Winter



After the "tour" of the storehouse we went outside and unloaded the truck of the firewood we bought for them. As I helped brother Gennady unload the wood, all we could hear was our dear sister in spontaneous prayer, thanking God over and over again for how much He loves them and for how He had sent us to help them. She had spent her entire monthly pension on buying firewood which had only lasted them three weeks. Two old souls, so very thankful that people cared enough to think of them and help them.

Photo: Nina overcome with gratitude, openly praying to God with thanks for the firewood. She's wearing the fleece we gave her



I have never seen poverty quite like this. They are about 5 miles walk over tracks and fields from the nearest shop, and there are very few houses in between. Doctors are out of the question, they simply have to trust in God. Nina doesn't get to the shop the entire Winter. As we drove away heading back to a warm place with warm blankets in a warm car, I had to sit back and reflect at how wonderful our God is. In their poverty, God has called them to a greater service, as servants of a higher calling. He claims them for His kingdom. In their poverty they fed us what

they themselves cannot afford to eat and loaded our arms with potatoes and pickled vegetables, taking the very food that they need to survive and giving it to us. An amazingly humbling sight which will not soon be forgotten.

We've made a 9 minute movie of the whole experience which you can see at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P6tWTzH20-Q>

Finland

Carelinks has been in touch with a Chinese student in Finland who has been studying our websites and Bible Basics quite extensively online. He had been emailing us question upon question about the scriptures. While I was here he asked if we would come and baptize him. So we took a bus to Estonia and a ferry from there to Helsinki, Finland meet with the guy.

As we arrived at the hotel near where he was going to university, we called and had him come over to the hotel we were staying in. He came in and sat down and we talked about the scriptures for hours. He had question after question. Things like the difference between soul and spirit, given the confusion between these terms in the Chinese Bible. We brought him to Genesis, Ecclesiastes and Romans in our explanation. It was such a joy talking to someone so excited about the gospel and the things of God. After this he asked us to be baptized, he too wanted to have a part in God's kingdom! We now all have a Chinese brother in Finland, his name is YE, please pray for him in his walk towards the kingdom.

Photos: Brother Ye with us; showing him a powerpoint presentation



After his baptism, Ye and I went for a walk around and on a frozen lake in Finland. We talked about life, where we are from among many other things. I remember a conversation we had about prayer and reading the Bible. He was so excited to be given the Bible reading planner, knowing that people around the world would be reading the same things he was every day. We laughed and prayed as we wandered around Finland for over an hour talking about spiritual things. It was hard to say goodbye to such a lovely brother. He is so alive and so willing to do what he can to spread the truth around his campus. We gave him materials to get started and headed off to sleep. It's amazing how God works. A Chinese man baptized in Finland of all places. And on the ferry over, we struck up conversation with another Chinese student. For the only time in my life I happened to have Chinese Bible literature in my luggage, intended for brother Ye, and so was able to give this man a copy!

Conclusion

I am in Latvia as I write this quick Carelink before I head to sleep. Tomorrow I am heading back to America with a small stop off in England. God gave me an opportunity to see how truly ripe the harvest is throughout the world. My eyes have been opened in a myriad of ways. I have seen tears, laughter, joy, baptisms, and the truth being spread to so many that God is calling towards His kingdom. I remember Jesus' words, "pray to God that He sends laborers into the harvest." Carelinks is involved in so many ways to try and get the word out about the coming of Jesus. Literature is being sent out all over the world and people are responding. It is quite an exhortation to see the room from which Brother Marcus works all day sending out Bible Basics

all over the world. Welfare needs are great, as well as the need for more people to get involved. From the simplest thing like remembering some of the people we write about in prayer to coming out with us as we meet these people to helping us get literature to people in their native tongues. There is so much more that can be done if only we take the time and effort to do it. As the world keeps spinning and people are losing hope, we have the greatest gift that we could ever give someone. God has opened our eyes, He has shown us that Jesus will return soon to establish a rule that is beyond our imagination. At times this side of the kingdom we can see what it will be like, please join us in this wonderful work! Our emails are below if you would like to contact us, please feel free to drop us a line.

Peace

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