

August 2014 Ukraine and Ukraine Bible School

Please do continue praying for **Ukraine** and our brothers and sisters there. The situation is truly tragic, as a nation divides against itself, Russians against Ukrainians, young pro-westerners against older folks who look to the East rather than the West. Nearly 2000 people have been killed in the violence, many thousands injured, homes and villages destroyed, families divided, as some take refuge in Russia and others flee to safer parts of Ukraine. These events have touched many in our community in Ukraine. Sister Elena attended the **Bible School**, having fled Kramatorsk after her apartment block was shelled and glass knocked out of the windows. Please pray that when she returns, it will be habitable. And please pray too for those younger and middle aged brethren who are now receiving their call up papers to fight for the Ukrainian army. The situation was such that the sanatorium we were planning to use for the School had to turn us away at the last minute- it is filled with injured people. We were really blessed to find another sanatorium at short notice.

Despite all these problems, we held a very spiritual **Bible School**, attended by a total of 70 brothers and sisters and their friends. some only came for a day but it was a wonderful experience and we thank you for your donations which enabled it. Brother Andy Taylor came out from the Windermere UK ecclesia and gave some talks and spent time pastorally supporting our new brothers and sisters. He is a very mature and spiritual brother and we loved his company. We also had a group of 6 African visitors, the fruit of the work of our brother Samuel in Odessa, and one of them, JACKSON, was baptized by brother Andy. With these visitors in mind, we conducted the School in both English and Russian, and so many of the recordings of the talks will be accessible to you. They will in due course be online, Lord willing, at https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLtFaNqyleAvklGbb0Qo3CnZ5P4_0tFcsD

We rejoiced in the baptisms of NASTYA [daughter of sister Marina from Kharkov], NADEZHDA, VIKTOR & TAMARA, ANDREJ [a direct fruit of our Bible distribution program] and VIKTOR, husband of sister Vera and father of brother Denis. Further, one contact from our work with ex-JWs, DENIS, was visited and baptized , with our brothers Sergej & Vitaly assisting greatly.

Especially moving was the baptism of Viktor, whose wife and son have been baptized many years. He is really very ill and barely able to walk. He was literally carried by our brethren to the lake, carried into the water, and despite great pain and difficulty, was immersed- and greeted and dried with such tenderness and care by his wife and son.



Here you can see fellowship with our African visitors, brother Andy about to baptize Jackson, and the children with the copy of Nebuchadnezzar's image they made, which formed the basis of our discussions as to how the image stands complete in the last days:



Brother Nikolaj has been baptized many years, and interests so many in the Gospel. He always carries his well marked and indexed Bible with him. Here's our brother with his Bible and sister Nadia, who was baptized as a result of his personal witness:



Brother Andy wrote up his impressions:

*Apart from the mosquitoes, I can't recommend the **Ukraine Bible School** highly enough. Never having been to Ukraine before and not speaking a word of Ukrainian (or Russian, apart from nyet which I didn't need anyway as the experience was yes, yes; not no, no) the welcome from the Eastern European brothers and sisters and those from other climes could hardly have been warmer. Study sessions mainly led by Duncan on the daily readings were lively, and translations willingly provided for those with English as first language including a number of Ukraine-based Nigerians.*

The accommodation being in a Soviet era sanatorium was interesting set in extensive grounds in a wooded village setting to the north of Kyiv. The nearby lake yielded a more than adequate setting for the baptisms that took place at the School. These were indeed joyful occasions and we hope that the recreational bathers enjoyed the musical accompaniment as much as we did. The last evening saw a moving breaking of bread service which was most moving and helpful for all, including of course our new brothers and sisters. After the final study session covering Romans chapters 10 and 11 in which Duncan further reflected on the possible nearness of our Lord's return (one of the strong themes of our time together) we concluded the evening with a talent show; some exhibited more talents than others, but I have to say that the language 'barrier' did little to attract from our enjoyment of the varied items.

As I mentioned I had not been to Ukraine before, but definitely do hope to be asked again. I would recommend this to anyone who needs uplifting in their faith and who would like to enjoy fellowship with brothers and sisters in this part of the world which has not had things easy in the last several months. It was especially good to see the loving relationship between people of different ages and backgrounds, and the renewing of friendships that had clearly lasted many years, in contrast to the spirit of breakup in relationships which there is now throughout Ukraine.

With love from your brothers and sisters of Carelinks