

August 2024 Latvia, Ukraine, Israel

This week has seen intense activity and lots of travelling to support long established brothers and sisters in need throughout Latvia and Ukraine. The effects of the war are felt as ever by ordinary people and especially those we've baptized over the years who are now elderly, sick, disabled and geographically isolated. We so appreciate your material support enabling us to assist them and do ask it continues, especially with Winter and cold temperatures set to arrive in a couple of months.

LATVIA

This week we visited our beloved brothers and sisters in Latvia, some baptized for many years. We held the usual breaking of bread meeting in a cafe in a "Russian" suburb of Riga- the meeting was the best attended we have had since Duncan & Cindy left Latvia. Our baptized ones are inviting new people- although mostly elderly and therefore in difficult situations. The meeting was such a joyful buzz of fellowship, happy memories of our many years of previous meetings when we had the hall, and of course the Bible study and breaking of bread followed by the meal provided. It was concerning to hear increasing complaints of very primitive Russophobic racism against our Russian speaking brethren. This kind of white-on-white racism is definitely on the increase, fed by crude memes and misinformation being shared on social media. Cindy as ever was running around listening to everyone's many health problems and trying to advise:



Afterwards we were able to baptize LIGA in a lake nearby [you can see her wearing a blue dress we bought her from a 2nd hand clothing store for the occasion].



We also drove over to Eastern Latvia, visiting the growing group near to the Russian border. Unemployment is huge in those small villages, derelict buildings and closed shops everywhere. It's a real struggle for survival especially in the Winter months. Sandra now has enough firewood to last at least the first months of Winter, and we'll see how we can help later this year. She's also hobbling around with a broken foot- it's a long expensive journey to health care, and often health care has to be paid for. Geographical isolation combined with lack of public transport and services makes life all so very difficult. Especially in the Winter. Many have to decide whether to prioritize warmth or health care. We of course are seeking to assist as many as we can in these difficult situations. Sandra was a dynamic member of our group in Riga, and she expressed such true and deep gratitude for all the years of work we did there, which brought her to the Lord. She continues her daily Bible reading, although hobbling about on a broken foot and hugely swollen ankle which we gave her funds to get seen to:



UKRAINE

We made another trip to see and assist as many as we could despite limited timeframe and the usual difficulties of travelling in a war zone which further slows things up. Again, we thank God for delivering us from all the potential harm there is in Ukraine at this time. Air raids and missile strikes continue a daily reality for so many. Even outlying villages are not totally unaffected as we discovered... because the "game" is for Ukraine to shoot down and explode the Russian missiles in midair before they reach their targets on the ground. Which means that these explosions and falling debris can occur over your head just about anywhere.

Our focus was on preparing our folks for the Winter and encouraging the growing group which our amazing sister Nina has developed in her cut off, isolated, depopulated "village" far from any main road. We were much encouraged by sister Vera, who has got so much food stored up preserved for the Winter; and by brother Igor, whose major heart attack at least relieves him from being called up to fight. You can see him here with the wood for Winter, which should last for some while if not the whole Winter. It's not easy getting genuinely dry wood, not recently cut "wet" wood that will give more smoke than heat and has basically been randomly cut down by cowboy operators. The difficulty is always delivery... but at least Igor has enough to face Winter beginning in October.



Sister Nina was spiritually amazing as ever. She continues to share the Gospel to everyone left in that most depressed and depressive village and we baptized OLGA. Nina as usual wrote a song and poem for the occasion, which she sung:



Those isolated villages are really very depressed places, especially in Winter. People are effectively subsistence farmers, pensions are tiny, nobody has a car, the roads are terrible, just tracks in places, the houses are falling down [most people, including Nina, are just squatting in them, having been directed there by the Government after fleeing from Russian occupied areas] ... theft is rife, there's no Police presence, people just fending for themselves. And yet in such an environment, the Gospel spreads.

We also drove Nina to the nearest large town- she can't walk without crutches and her pension payments are so tiny. We do support her and appreciate your donations which mean we can give such help to many in these hard situations. It's expensive for her to get anywhere and she has such little money anyway to spend on anything, including health care. Her crutches broke and was using some ancient ones which are very heavy, exhausting for her to use, and whose rubbers are worn away. This means that she's very frightened of going up any stairs; and in the town, in shops with tile floors [unlike her home in the village] she was quite terrified as without the rubbers, just the bare metal, she kept slipping and falling over:



We managed to find and buy some quite expensive light aluminum crutches for her, took her to

choose and buy a rucksack so she can carry things better, including potatoes she harvests... and especially, took her to the "apteka" [chemist] to get all sorts of things both for her and others baptized in the village:



We're considering another visit later in the year, Lord willing. But please, do pray for our brethren suffering there in Ukraine. And for the Gospel to continue bringing forth fruit there.

ISRAEL

As we go to press, our visit is ongoing in Israel and we appreciate your prayers for the brethren and the work there, that it can be conducted safely given the situation there at this time.

PRAYER POINTS

- For those recently baptized
- For all victims of racism including Russophobia at this time
- Thanksgiving for safety during recent work in Ukraine
- For sister Nina and many others in rural poverty worried about facing another Winter
- For our ongoing work in Israel

With love from your brothers and sisters of Carelinks