

Bosnia Welfare Work December 2004

As previously mentioned, our brethren in Bosnia have been spearheading a wonderful outreach programme; there have been 5 baptisms in Bosnia in the last 12 months! They are backing this up by running a low key humanitarian programme, aiming to help genuinely needy people, quite regardless of their religious position. The tragic legacy of the Bosnian war remains and in some ways, the consequences of it are biting even deeper into an already very poor society. Brother Dzenan informed us that over 50% of the population are unemployed, and many have no access to healthcare, which has to be paid for. Bullet riddled houses and ruined factories and schools remain to this day, and the huge graveyards especially for war victims remain as a witness to the huge trauma these people have been through.



Photo: graveyard

All the way through our brethren's humanitarian programme, there is the desire to back up the preaching of true doctrine with the true practice which this should lead to. Further, many people, especially students, have taken note of our brethren's work. Their magazine Carpe Diem is distributed to many people.



Photo: magazine Carpe Diem

They are eager to donate what clothing or things they can for others even less fortunate than themselves, and it is from these contacts, rather than from those actually receiving the help, that serious interest is being shown in the Truth. This, we believe, is exactly how it should be. It is immoral and wrong to offer welfare support in return for conversion; and this our brethren are not doing. But the light of their good deeds is being noticed by others. The local press reported very favourably upon their work, and have promised to attach a press reporter to the next visiting team to show the nation the great things that are being achieved- with no running costs, overheads etc., as are so often associated with the larger aid organizations.

Another pleasing feature of the work is that a large amount of the clothing was donated from brethren and sisters in Latvia. The true body of Christ edifies itself in love, and it is wonderful to be a channel through which the poor saints of northern Europe can help even poorer people in southern Europe. It was therefore with great joy that we were able to drive down the material from Latvia to Bosnia.

Arriving exhausted after 2 days driving, the first task was to divide up the clothing into sacks and boxes, to be taken to the appropriate families.



Photo: divide up the clothing into sacks

Bro. Dzennan had done a first class job in itemizing the exact needs of each family; but even then, it took some time to split everything up. Further, Pampers and food were bought for families in need of them. Our brethren, who are mainly university students, had been collecting very small donations from other students in order to make up Christmas boxes for underprivileged children. There are many orphaned and sick children in Bosnia as a result of the war legacy. Each Christmas box contains some sweets, toy cars for boys or doll for girls, etc.



Photo: Each Christmas box contains some sweets, toy cars for boys or doll for girls, etc.

Each family was given a sack of clothes relevant to their needs and ages of their children. Each sack had a 2005 Bible readers' calendar attached to it, and we were also able to give 100 Bible Basics rulers for distribution to children and students. They are 6 inch rulers with advertising for Bible Basics on them.



Photo: Each sack had a 2005 Bible readers' calendar attached to it

The next job was to distribute the material. This took some time, and would've been quite impossible without the Land Cruiser.



Photo: distribute the material

Several families were visited in the mountains above Sarajevo, driving on icy mountain roads to get there. Everywhere we saw evidence of trashed homes and deeply broken lives. We also paid a visit to a brother who is a coal miner. Due to fraud in the management, he receives a total of about 25 Euros for one month's dangerous work. He is not given any mask, and has to eat his bread covered with coal dust when they have a 15 minute break every 4 hours. The family are expecting their first baby soon, and are being evicted from the tumbledown home in which they live, as they are living there rent free at the moment. Other brethren face similar accommodation problems. The typical situation is that they are Bosnians or Croats who had their homes destroyed during the war, and they are basically squatting in formally Serb owned

homes, whose owners fled back to Serbia. However, under the Dayton Accords, each refugee has a right to repossess their pre-war property. This means that, as security and calm returns to the region, the Serb owners can return at any time and re-claim their property.

The reception was of course warm and there was much gratitude from the heart. Social welfare appears confined to the cities, and the aid organizations don't seem to reach into the mountain areas. One family receives Government support of 10 Euros every 5 months. Another family live in their bullet riddled home in the mountains with their 9 children, one of whom is suffering from Leukaemia. We arrived with the promised coats for the children,



Photo: promised coats for the children

and the kids just couldn't get their hands on them quick enough. Here again one is impressed by the absolute relevance of the aid given- coats given by sisters in Latvia and Western Europe were being put into the hands of cold children living on the side of a snow covered mountain in Bosnia.



Photo: child is eagerly viewing the coat he's going to be given, and his sister is clutching her coat

You can see how warmly wrapped up Cindy is in the above photo; the child is eagerly viewing the coat he's going to be given, and his sister is clutching her one.



Photo: In the photo of the nine children, you will notice the one with leukaemia wearing a head covering and face mask. You can see their bullet and mortar riddled outhouse in the background.

And this of course was just one of many families being assisted. We received no requests for financial help from them and we hope of course that they will perceive that we are motivated in this work by the love and grace we have seen and known in the Lord Jesus. May it lead both these families and others getting involved in this work to know the real Christ.

The one person we had hoped to baptize in Bosnia wasn't ready, but we hope there will be more baptisms on the next visit, God willing.

We're pleased to report that on the drive down, we were able to spend 3 hours in intensive doctrinal discussion with a long term contact of many years standing in Poland. He had previously met with Br David Budden and Sis Jean Field of the CBM, and we appreciate their

help to him. We left him to take time to think through the implications of baptism, and we were delighted to baptize KRZYSZTOF on our return journey through Poland.

We truly give thanks for the marvellous blessing attending these efforts to serve our Lord. It's amazing how He uses us to network with so many people, and our only desire is that things all come together for His glory.

Anyone interested in supporting the work here, driving clothes down to Bosnia, collecting clothes, photocopying or printing or duplicating preaching material in Bosnian, should please contact us at info@carelinks.net . There is also a shortage of Bosnian Bibles. There are plenty of New Testaments around, but the only complete Bosnian Bibles [OT & NT] available in Bosnia cost around 30 Euros- a months' salary for many people. So there's a need to somehow buy or obtain copies, as obviously serious preaching work requires that advanced contacts have their own Bibles.

from your brothers and sisters of CCM