

Brother Jurijs, Haiti, Impressions of first time visitors April 2010

Acts 1 is the New Testament Bible portion for this Sunday, and an MP3 of an exhortation on this chapter can be found at <http://www.aletheiacollege.net/audio/acts1.mp3>

HAITI UPDATE

The wonderful progress of the ecclesia in this battered country continues:

My Salutation in the powerful name of our Lord. All the pleasure is mine the fact that I am sending you these lines , in order to inform you that we have received the box of Books on Thursday. Majority of the people at the ecclesia have already had a Bible Basics but yesterday I distributed 45 of these books and saved the rest for other people who will be studying with us. I have sent some pictures but they are not in good quality at all. I do not know what is happening with my camera, it does not take good pictures as it used to do before. Please share our gratitude to Brother Marcus, tell him that we really appreciated this gesture, these books are much more important that sending money, even if we need that also. As I explained you in my previous email, on the 26th of April we will start a week of special preaching. We want to contrast the faithful woman of the true ecclesia, and the prostitute of false religion which surrounds us here. Please pray just that our meeting place keeps out the rain enough so the visitors shall remain.

Bonne journée, et Que Dieu vous soit en aide !

Brother Esmath

We're pleased to report the baptism this week at the Riga Bible Centre of JURIJS, another resident of the night shelters, who was introduced to the Truth by Brother Sasha [right in the photo].



One of the night shelters has the following graffiti on it:



You will notice the hammer and sickle signs, and the Russian graffiti reads: "The USSR is our homeland". As more and more people find it impossible to rent even a room with their tiny pensions and are driven into living in the night shelters, there is arising ever stronger a desire to return to the stability of the USSR Communist days- even though "the party's over". In this desperate climate, some people are strongly drawn to the Gospel.

We appealed in the last Carelink for major assistance with the work of the Riga Bible Centre. Following is a very personal and frank report from an Australian brother who recently visited the Centre:

Visit to Latvia

*Brother **Colin Green** (Hurstville, Australia)*

I didn't quite know what to make of Duncan Heaster and Carelinks. For some time I'd wanted to get to the bottom of it all. Some insist they should be isolated and not supported. Bringing them

up in conversation usually results in extreme censure, extreme praise or an “I don’t want to talk about that” response.

In April we travelled to Holland. Hendrika was born in Den Helder and had never been back so we made the trek. It’s a two hour flight to Riga, Latvia where Duncan and Cindy live with their delightful little daughter, Evia, so we asked them if we could come over for a couple of days. I wanted to check out for myself the work going on; were so many people really being baptized and the Truth thriving as we hear, or not?

Their response was warm and welcoming. Duncan was keen to do a Bible School and asked me to do the talks and the Sunday exhortation. I based them on Psalm 146 and the theme was “In whom we Trust”. Duncan met us at the airport and immediately took us to see a refugee brother who was incarcerated in a refugee camp outside Riga. It’s not very well known even by the locals but after a short trip from Riga into a rather seedy location we arrived. Just a small door with a metal plaque. Duncan knocked and we were let in by guards that clearly knew him well. They were courteous, not friendly – but not unfriendly either. Just officials doing their job. After surrendering our passports we were admitted to a courtyard and then to another building where more guards processed us and one brought Brother Z to us. He spoke in a lovely soft voice and quoted his well-worn Bible from John 17 which we read together. He was very concerned about possible execution in Iran if he had to return there. Mat 10:28 just had to be so relevant. “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

This was our first lesson of the hope, deliverance and peace that Carelinks delivers to cast-off people and more scriptures flowed in the mind. Mat 25:36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me. Carelinks have worked hard to assist Bro Z (and other refugees too). Initially and primarily to teach God’s Word of truth while supporting with food, medical and practical legal advice too. We have since heard that his appeal was successful and he is now free in Latvia! God’s Grace is huge!

We then went to Duncan and Cindy’s home. It’s located in a Soviet era block in a poorer area of town (the extremes of rich and poor are indeed VERY extreme). We passed the huge skip dump of rubbish at the main entrance (picked over each morning for scraps by both dogs and people) walked up the very dark stairs and Duncan let us through the thick steel security doors into their modest and airy home.

Once inside we were immediately very comfortable. The bond between this little family was instantly apparent. On many occasions we watched Duncan’s bonding and training of his lovely little daughter. He’d say “let’s pray to God” tuck her tiny hands below her chin and the family would pray together. Bible texts are everywhere. Even on the inside of the toilet door!

Saturday morning was the first of our studies. Duncan was a little disappointed with the turnout but frankly I was quite impressed! At the last Bible School they had had around 80 people – all crammed into a room that in my view could not really hold more than 35 comfortably. So they had reduced the “promotion”. We had around 35 people.

Some had come large distances – Duncan personally drove one family three hours – two six-hour return journeys (he took them home too). Others came on public transport and I saw Duncan slipping the fare to one sister that had no money at all.

It was a really interesting mix of people. Many were people living in shelters at night but were turned out into the streets each day. Some of these have been “high-flyers” in their day – military personnel, marketing people, a university lecturer, trades people – a real mix! Cindy herself is a qualified medical doctor and there were two med students too. Surely only Christ could combine such a diverse and interactive group under one common focus!

An aside... We found the language barrier quite difficult to overcome and we reflected just HOW effective God’s changing of the languages at Babel was – and continues to be. We only spoke English (Hendrika’s smattering of Dutch was no help here). Estonia, Lithuania and Russia are very close borders – with entirely different languages. The universal languages of hand signals, smiles, hugs and friendship were well exercised! We were so appreciative of those who could translate for us and give us context of conversations, especially when Duncan had to race away to collect people and arrange things.

Some of these folk had been baptized for many years – fifteen years and more. Others more recently and others were “watchers”. One of these, Vladimir, had been coming along for some years and after the Bible School asked Duncan for baptism. Such a wonderful buzz! He had been steadily learning and felt it was “time”. Duncan did indeed baptize him the following week.

Carelinks laid on good, nutritious food throughout the Bible School. Simple and delicious. The eyes of these people simply glowed as they filled up then sat back to hear God’s Word. The “three-hours-away” family stayed at the meeting hall as did others from out of town.

More scripture sprung to mind

Jas 2:14-17 “What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. “

We certainly witnessed faith in action...

As mentioned the talks were based around Psalm 146 and were entitled “In Whom We Trust”. It seemed a good theme for this long-suffering group of “have-not” brothers and sisters.

I (Colin) did the talks. Duncan translated into Russian and when he had to leave dear Sister Irma took on the task. Poor dear was quite terrified but did it brilliantly! And these beautiful people REALLY focused and listened. There was barely a sound - not a yawn, eyes all wide and all listening intently...

When came time for discussion the place was electric! The questions were deep and the insights extremely clear and relevant. Especially in the session “Revenge and Forgiveness” which to these brothers, sisters and friends was deep and very personal – they had had it VERY hard. Trusting in God when man (including themselves) had so solidly failed them was a real focus for their faith. Several stood to say how they had come to Christ from atheism and some from violence to all things Christian and to encourage the others. They revelled in the wonderful example of Paul’s conversion on the road to Damascus.

We were due to fly out to Paris on the Monday morning and Duncan was off to Norway early that morning to do a final examination and then baptize a contact there. We chatted until after mid-night and frankly we were dead tired and went to bed. We could see Duncan’s light on in his

“office” before we dropped off and when we woke in the morning he was gone – his flight left at 6:30am. At times over the weekend he was so tired that he was jumpy just to touch him. He carries a massive load.

One thing which HAD been niggling at us was just how prepared for baptism some of these people actually were and we asked Duncan about that. The main method of instruction is via The Bible and Duncan’s book, “Bible Basics” but there is some high degree of “filtering” before these are even sent out. The cost and workload is significant and Carelinks tries to ascertain that applicants are genuine.

Once that is cleared applicants get Bible Basics and Carelinks people (in practice Duncan does MUCH of the communication) check progress, answer questions and generally teach. Duncan has written many “special focus” books too such as “The Real Devil”, “The Real Christ” and many more in MANY languages. Some are seriously big books. Some are more precise “booklets”.

Another aside... I saw a booklet on alcoholism at the “hall” that Duncan had written and I read a little of it. It is really excellent. Given that Duncan works so much with people with this awful affliction he put his thoughts down for all to share. Practical, Bible-based material. I was really impressed that he applied 1Co 8:13 so deliberately “Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble”. So Duncan will now never touch alcohol – in case it is a bad example and causes one of his beloved street people to stumble. And he didn’t. We enjoyed wine at our meal – but he abstained. The wine at the meeting was non-alcoholic for this very reason. And some we met HAVE been able to “stay dry” with Carelinks help for a very long time. Inspiring!

When the applicant is ready and asks for baptism, that is arranged. Often by Duncan who will go pretty much anywhere. The drain on the minimal budget for such travel is huge.

It is surely an area that others could help with, perhaps in association with a holiday or business trip? Ask Duncan about this valuable work!

Finance and baptisms are just two areas that the Heasters could use help with. They REALLY appreciated our visit –we didn’t know how much! So visits, especially by couples is intensely welcome!

We went and we saw and we KNOW that Carelinks is doing simply wonderful work. Some may say that this could have been staged. It simply could not. The intensity and understanding of the Brothers and Sisters in Riga are a monumental testament developed over twenty years of hard work. Yet this location is only a tiny part of Carelinks' work.

If anyone would like to discuss, email us at colin.green@bestofshow.com.au or hendrika.green@bestofshow.com.au

Details of how to donate to Riga Bible Centre can be found at <http://carelinks.net/doc/otherdonations> ; PayPal donations can be sent to info@carelinks.net

With love from your brothers and sisters of Carelinks