

December 2015 Winter Welfare Work

The *Bible Companion* readings for this Sunday include Revelation 14 and there is an MP3 file about this chapter at <http://www.aletheiacollege.net/audio/rev14.mp3>

You can see the archives of our MP3 files at <http://aletheiacollege.net/archives.html> and on iTunes at <https://itunes.apple.com/ca/podcast/christadelphian-bible-talks/id987163468>

Carelinks have been working in **Latvia** since 1990 and there have been hundreds of baptisms since then. Many are from the Russian community and are middle aged or elderly, receiving no or very little state support or pension, many having to live in night shelters. Some get only 10 Euros / month support from the EU. Not surprisingly, the hope of the Kingdom and the knowledge of the love of Christ is deeply attractive to this group. They are therefore in need of basic food and clothing throughout the year, but especially in the Winter months. Having to be out of the night shelters at 8 a.m. and only allowed back in 8 p.m. means they have to be on the streets all day. Many of these brothers and sisters are in this situation through no fault of their own, but simply as a consequence of the aftermath of the breakup of the USSR and the Russophobia which is so widespread in Europe.

We have volunteers coming over from Western ecclesias to help cook at the *Riga Bible Centre*; we provide meals, a one hour Bible class and clothing and other support 5 days / week. Presently br Jim & sis Anne Barton from Canada are with us, and brother Maxim continues to work tirelessly with the brethren and sisters. A typical day involves opening the doors at 4 p.m., allowing everyone to thaw out and have coffee before starting the Bible teaching at 5 p.m. Here's a typical scene, with Maxim calling everyone to their seats:



Cindy, Jim & Anne made a great meal for everyone on Christmas Eve; we hope to give the Winter Warmer packets out on New Year's Eve. In the photo you can see IGOR who was baptized later that evening:



Maxim has taken to starting the meetings by playing some music by our brother Robin Field; you can hear the original music at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ocAD1wU04kQ> and see a 1 minute video of the atmosphere just before the meeting starts at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=09qaZ1TV3ag>

We warmly welcome your contribution to this work, both financially as well as coming over to help; and especially your prayers.

We're pleased to tell you of the baptisms of IGOR and IGOR this week. Igor was moved to tears after being presented with a blanket knitted by Australian sisters and a warm hat, as well as an *NEV Bible* with commentary:



The other brother Igor baptized has serious skin problems and is in pain with his leg. Medical help all has to be paid for and it's hard for many to wash properly:



The one hour Bible sessions each day with these dear folks have led them towards the truth of the Lord Jesus and His Kingdom; we see ourselves as just pointing out the Way to them:



We also seek to provide support in the Winter to brothers and sisters throughout Eastern Europe. The cost of heating is often as much as pensioners receive each month, or even more. Even those in work find that monthly heating bills are as much as their salaries; Russia and Ukraine are really in serious economic crisis with many ordinary people especially pensioners in very difficult situations. If you don't pay your heating bill, then your flat is eventually taken from you. This week we were able to pay a large accumulated heating bill for a very sincere family who otherwise would have lost their apartment and had to enter the night shelter nightmare, which becomes a kind of Gulag Archipelago without a way out. They express their deepest thanks to you for your donations.

Our work is not without local opposition. One of the night shelters is run by a very extreme orthodox Christian, who has decided that his night shelter is not for those who reject the trinity and a personal satan. Rather bizarre that one has to believe in Satan to be an orthodox Christian! Brother Sasha was baptized some weeks back by Brethren Jim and Maxim and he was thrown out of the shelter as a result of saying he now denies the trinity and existence of satan as a personal being. He left only with slippers and a blanket, and found a place to sleep on the balcony of a derelict block next to the Daugava River, laying down just on cardboard. Maxim, Duncan & Evia were able to take him clean water and blankets, again knitted by our Australian sisters, and to buy him a pair of new warm boots [footwear is always a big issue for the homeless as the donations of clothes we get rarely include good boots]; and then returned on Christmas Day with hot food, more blankets and scarves to wrap himself in. He only stays the nights there as his biggest problem is drug addicts descending on him and stealing his blankets and driving him away. He wasn't therefore there on our second visit, but we left him hot food and more blankets to cheer him on his return. Our camera is broken and there are few hours of daylight in Riga at the moment, so apologies for the low quality of the shots. Here we are taking the boots and first blankets to our brother, and then delivering more blankets, some scarves and hot food for him to find on his return home:



PRAYER POINTS:

- For brother Sasha and his accommodation issues
- For our wisdom and resource in assisting those in need this Winter
- For those newly baptized
- For more workers to come over and assist in Riga

With love from your brothers and sisters of Carelinks