

December 2019 Latvia, Austria

AUSTRIA

About 3 years ago, an African living in Salzburg, Austria received from us a *Bible Basics* and *NEV Bible*. He attends a small group of other Africans who come together to search the scriptures. They had realized the need for baptism and he asked for more copies of *Bible Basics* so that they could have a baptism class. We sent these, and in due course, *NEV Bibles* for them. The trip we just made was therefore based upon a huge amount of correspondence and contact. They meet in an area over a workshop on the very edge of the city. It's a nice room, with a projector and sound system. They were a mixed group, some had been long settled in Austria, now established with jobs, homes and cars. Others were migrants who arrived in Italy and then were forced to move further north looking for work. We spent the Saturday going through the Gospel with them. Truly the Spirit of Christ was there.



And then on the Sunday after further teaching and a good confession of faith, we were able to baptize brothers PETER, BRYAN, ASHLEY and SAMSON and sisters FLORENCE, CELINE, BLESSING, JOY and CHRISTY. All the work done in producing material, publishing books and *NEV Bibles*, now the app... has paid off in a wonderful way. It was indeed a very special time together and the Lord is clearly working in many lives here.



Salzburg, birthplace of Mozart, is a trendy, wealthy city, full of fascinated visitors and tourists. But behind that charming face there is the army of low income and migrant workers who enable it all. And into these hard lives the light of the Gospel has come, lives all the harder from being far from home in a cold [-5 degrees when we were there] and foreign culture. Here you can see Peter being baptized- and then cycling off on his bicycle back into his new life, always looking for work, but now kitted up against the low temperatures- and with the Lord Jesus.



We made a big effort to enable the immersions, by bringing a large paddling pool from Latvia, together with hoses and various fittings. Blowing it up was quite the challenge without a pump. And then we soon drained all the hot water from the boiler in the kitchen we used. And then the fittings didn't quite work. All we had was a kitchen bowl to get the water in- and more to the point, out again back into the sink. It took a huge amount of work to get a few hundred liters of water in and out. Without spoiling the rather nice flooring, despite a tarpaulin we got especially to preserve it. All this was to avoid the very expensive cost of renting a large property with a private pool; hotel pools were not going to be appropriate for various reasons, and the spas in Austria have a rule that users must be naked, and share the spa with other users. So we were driven to be "fools for Christ's sake" with all our baptismal technology. But it worked and we achieved full immersion, to His glory.



You can see a video of various parts of the Bible talks and the baptisms at <https://youtu.be/KqSwxWRyjaw>

LATVIA

Our English language meetings in Riga are going well, very well, along with the five days / week feeding scheme and Bible studies- which has far higher attendance this year than last year. We printed and distributed a large number of leaflets in the areas around the hall, advertising our English church meetings and offering a free *NEV Bible*.

GALINA is in her 80s and housebound, living in a tall Soviet era apartment block . She got one of our leaflets. She's an erudite,educated woman who had studied English at university 60 years ago. And so she was able to understand our leaflet. She had recently got online, and discovered a whole new world of information. The internet gave her a new lease of life really. It was a great joy to meet her and baptize her. Here's an English summary of her testimony:

I grew up in the USSR, under the dogma of Marxist-Leninism and Darwinism. I was a keen member of the KOMSOMOL [Communist Youth League]. In those days, churches were being demolished or turned into factories or warehouses. Our platoon were sent to convert a church into a warehouse. I think the idea was that the teenage boys would enjoy smashing up and vandalizing the church. We were encouraged to do so. But although we were enthusiastic teenage Communists, it didn't seem right. To rip down crucifixes and trample them, and wreck the interior of the church. We did the job- but carefully removing all the church fixtures so it could be turned into a warehouse. But it seemed so very wrong to me. I decided I was a Communist, but, I didn't agree with the anti-religion dimension. When Communism ended, I got a Bible and began attending the Russian Orthodox church.

I had many questions. I wanted to know about immortal souls. If world population is increasing, does that mean God was creating new immortal souls? Where do the new immortal souls come from? Animals? What about the sons of God who married the daughters of men and had children? Were those sons of God really Angels? And how, well, did they actually sleep with each other? The Orthodox priests brushed off all my questions and told me I didn't come to church to ask questions about the Bible, and Bible reading wasn't a great idea. It was, I was told, what Protestants do. And as a Russian, I was, I was told, a member of Russian Orthodoxy.

I left the church. My grandchildren got me onto the internet. I discovered that the immortal soul idea came from Greek philosophy, not the Bible. Then, the leaflet came offering a free Bible with commentary. Now that was just what I wanted. I saw that the "sons of God" in Genesis 6 were not Angels but men. All made sense. Duncan offered to visit me as I can't go out anywhere. And all dropped into place. But I worry for my grandchildren's generation. They don't even know what a postage stamp is, they are looking at screens all the time. They can't write well, they just can tap on their screens. They want all knowledge immediately at the press of a button, without the discipline we had of studying and working things out for themselves.

So we thank God for the continued progress of the Gospel. Sisters like this underline the great advantage there would be of producing the *Bible Companion* app in Russian. Please pray for our sister, living as she does high up in an apartment block, unable to get out, just looking out of her window at the snow as she reads her Bible:



We have had a cold snap in Riga, which always means increased attendance at the soup kitchen. Opening time is always special- the crowd waiting outside in the cold, bursting in to the warm hall with the smell of food and coffee.

You can see a video of it at <https://youtu.be/h-dwhcRdIXg>

You will see from the photo how they all have their bag of belongings- as typically they are not allowed to leave anything in the night shelters in the day time:



Brother Daniel has been doing great things with the brothers and sisters, teaching them some of our hymns / songs in Russian translation. You can hear him teaching them "I have decided to follow Jesus" at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-7WjAHZnk4> . It was quite an achievement to teach a song in Russian to the group, and to get folks who live hard, depressive lives to clap and sing. Well done, Daniel:



PRAYER POINTS:

- For those recently baptized
- For those in night shelters or on the streets enduring the cold, damp weather in Eastern Europe and the Baltics especially
- For our plans to produce the Bible Companion app in Russian
- For our work in Portugal

With love from your brothers and sisters of Carelinks