

Ex-USSR, February 2008

Carelinks workers have done a lot of travelling in Russia, Ukraine and Moldova in recent times, providing Winter welfare assistance and baptizing students of the Bible Basics course. We're delighted to report the baptisms of NIKOLAJ, VALENTINA and ALEKSANDRA in the republic of Tatarstan, an autonomous Islamic republic surrounded by Russia. From far northern Siberia, brother Ivan wrote to us that "It is often -40 degrees, and I estimate that this season we will burn 40 cubic metres of firewood". That's a huge amount of logs to gather, store and chop to a size burnable in a stove. We're trying to support those in need in the rural areas by either sending cash or trying to get firewood delivered. Here's a typical receipt from one of those helped:



There really is great appreciation, and several times in the last few weeks we've received the message that "I really don't know what I'd have done if you hadn't have helped". And what about those who don't have a family of brothers and sisters, or [as a result of generations of atheism here], little or no natural family to support them? As the Winter wears on, it's a common sight to see old ladies selling their coats, things from around the house, milk from a cow [sold in old Coca-Cola bottles, "... very very tasty, because it's not been boiled..."], spare shoes, etc. Here are some pictures taken this week on our visit to Krivy Rog in the Ukraine:



We were able to make a brief visit to Moldova, and took a huge box of clothing donated from various brothers and sisters both in Eastern Europe and in the UK. You can see it in the left hand corner of the photo below. Whilst there it was a pleasure to meet with the ecclesia, and to witness the baptism of IGOR, an 18 year old friend of another young brother. We took brother Alek with us onwards into Ukraine, to visit contacts interested in baptism. We're pleased to report that the market stall business of our sisters there has been going well, but new regulations hit them with a large registration fee this year, which we were able to assist with.



One baptism of note was that of SASHA in Ukraine, who came to us through the Russian language websites. Although there's no snow on the ground, it was very cold. The pipes had burst in the apartment blocks, so there was no running water for the baptism. So our brother decided to be baptized in a very polluted lake near to his block. The lake was frozen, but had melted around the edges.



We threw bricks into the water to see how thick the ice was. The problem was that where the surface ice had melted, there was still ice below that. Here's our brother looking at the ice below the melted surface water; and in the next photo you can see the break between the frozen surface and the melted surface:



So it was a great act of faith for our brother to undress and go in- it was soooo cold.



We too read God's word, and the choice for us day by day is just as radical- to obey , to submit to God's way, when everything in our flesh cries out in protest against it. Please continue your prayers and support for these dear brothers and sisters.

With love from your brothers and sisters of Carelinks