

February 2014 Riga, China, Rwanda, Carelinks UK Conference

The *Bible Companion* readings for this Sunday include Mark 5 and there is an MP3 about this chapter at <http://www.aletheiacollege.net/audio/mk5.mp3>

You can see the archives of our MP3 files

at <http://aletheiacollege.net/archives.html> ; *Carelinks Bible Radio* is at <http://r-b-c.org/listen.php> ; and God willing, we have our live video link service in English this Sunday at

08:00 a.m. GMT - you can view direct at www.carelinks.net [scroll down to the video screen] or if you want to make comments and participate in live chat,

use <http://www.ustream.tv/channel/biblecenter> . You can view recordings of previous sessions at www.youtube.com/CarelinksMinistries

CARELINKS UK CONFERENCE

You'll find a warm welcome and stimulating, varied program at the Carelinks UK Conference scheduled for **Sat. 29 March in Croydon, UK**, God willing. More details

at <http://carelinks.net/doc/events>

RIGA, WINTER WELFARE

Brother Denis Leverett of the Chelmsford, UK ecclesia has been working hard for 2 weeks at the *Riga Bible Center*; further to our last report, we're pleased to report the baptism of . Here are his thoughts and challenges to us all; our next group of helpers, sisters Edwina King [Walton, UK and France], Miriam Clark [France] and June Williams [Guildford, UK] are arriving this weekend as you receive this message.

In acknowledgment to the Riga feeding programme and the meeting in Riga I quote Matthew 25:35 "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited me in".

I am about to come to the end of my two weeks stay in Riga helping the feeding programme in the *Riga Bible Centre*. For me it has been a very joyous time meeting brethren and sisters, witnessing five more brothers being baptised and also meeting the many others who come into the hall. Yes, five new brothers have been baptised, each giving a long account of how, since they have been coming to the hall, through the teaching that they have listened to, they have come to know our Father and his Son, and sincerely want to show their love for them and the faith that they have in them, by being baptised. Let me quickly tell you about one of them from this week – his name is NIKOLAY. He is a thick-set Russian in his early thirties who was born in Latvia, but is now stateless and so he cannot get regular work. As a boy he had to have many operations and said that through all of them he truly felt that God was with him and would pull him through. He used to belong to an orthodox church and never owned or could afford a Bible, until he was given one at the *Bible Center*. He said that he always felt that all the ceremony and the riches of the church he attended had no place in believing in God. He had been coming to the Hall for some time and (like the other four brothers who I saw baptised said), he says that his life has been gradually changed and that through baptism he wants to share in the wonderful close relationship that our Father and his Son hold out to all who believe in them.

Photos: Nikolay's baptism; being presented with an *NEV Bible* with commentary as a baptism present by sister Judite :



Monday to Thursday the hall opens its doors at 4pm to welcome in both those who want to come for warmth and food, and those who come to hear God's word (as well as the warmth and food!) Over 75% of those who come in are now baptised. First thing is coffee (gallons and gallons of it) which they come back time and again for. Then after an hour they go to their seats and attentively listen to the readings for the day and the explanation given. At about 6pm the talk finishes and then it's time for them to enjoy some warm and nourishing food. (On Sundays the day starts with coffee at 11.00am, an hour long meeting at 12.00, followed by coffee again for half an hour. The Breaking of Bread Service is then held followed by lunch).

Photo: Denis [far left] serving food; brother Slavik with a black eye after being beaten. Living rough is not a very safe way to live, desperate, cold and hungry people are quite willing to use violence to get basic food and clothing from another. Here Slavik is cutting another brother's hair, a common sight at the hall after our meetings are over:



When you see (as I did on most days) over 100 people patiently waiting in a queue for a bowl of food and two slices of bread, it is quite humbling. Even more so when, as you give the bread, they smile at you and say in broken English "Thank you, thank you, thank you very much". You just give them something to eat for which they are extremely thankful. Then they once again venture out into the dark and the cold – it's been -17°C [$0^{\circ}\text{Fahrenheit}$] for most of the time that I have been here!

For some of them like Tanya (she is 75) who we went to see, there is the chance (it's not guaranteed) to go to a night shelter. At the shelter I visited they sleep in rows on cold floors - but at least they are in the dry! For 280 days a year those taken in are given shelter from 8pm until 8am. At 8am they then have to leave having had no food. All sleep in their heavy coats, both for warmth and also in fear that, if they take them off, they will be stolen. The toilet facilities here are very basic – just holes in the ground with no privacy. The only possessions that they have they carry with them everywhere as they are not allowed to leave anything in the shelter. Tanya, by the way, is quite well spoken and regularly reads all the readings at the meetings. Sometimes she walks over 6kms (each way) to attend. She worked until she retired, but now being stateless she receives no pension.

Unfortunately not all are able to spend nights in a shelter. Those with communicable diseases (TB, HIV etc) have to find somewhere to sleep rough. One evening at 8pm, four of us visited four of them who were sleeping huddled together under a thin blanket, under a stair well in an extremely cold and draughty disused warehouse. Fortunately the temperature had risen to -14°C , but there was snow on the ground and a strong wind. Yes, a very upsetting experience to see brothers and sisters (two only recently baptised) living so. We gave them some warm clothing, went to the local supermarket and bought some food for them. Then we had to leave them to their freezing cold bed and return home to the warm house that we are staying in.

Another upsetting but truly inspiring experience was visiting a brother, his name was Anatoly, who had been admitted to hospital a few days before following a stroke he had suffered in the night shelter he was staying. He was recovering well but has some paralysis on his right hand side. The six bed ward that he was in is very basic. The only possessions that he had were a few items which easily fitted into the small locker beside his bed, and his treasured Bible which he proudly displayed on the top of his locker. He was always reading it and told the other five men in the ward that they should read it if they wanted to know God and be loved by Him and the Lord Jesus. All the time that we were there he talked about how precious his faith was to him (he was baptised a number of years ago), and how he was trying to convince the other five men that their religion (Orthodox) was wrong, and that they should believe in God and the Lord Jesus in the way that he does.

But perhaps the biggest emotion that I will leave **Riga** with is how moving my experience has been. Moving - that in some small (even pathetic) way, I have been able to help these people in the short time that I have been here. Moving - to see these people who have nothing come inside and enjoy not just a warm meal but inner warmth as well. Warmth one to another as they talk to each other and talking to us (as best we could understand them) who prepared and gave them the food. Moving too - to see so many wanting to know more about Our Father and the Lord Jesus and commit their lives to them. Moving - to witness those five baptisms. Five new brethren for the meeting in Riga, for me and for all the others who have previously gone to or are going to help in Riga. Five new brethren for all.

May it indeed be soon when the Lord Jesus returns to this world and brings that time that we look for. The time when they and all who suffer, who and wherever they are, will suffer no more. When all of God's chosen children will live in Peace and Joy for evermore. Finally: a witness that our Father is blessing the work being done in Riga. There are no meetings or feeding programmes on Fridays and Saturdays. When we arrived at the Hall on Friday 31st Jan about 9am, work had just started to dig up the road in front of the hall as a large water main pipe serving the area had broken. There was thick ice everywhere. There was no water in the hall - no water for cooking, no water for the toilets. The utility company worked all through Friday, through the night and until late Saturday to mend the pipe. Consequently the meeting and food programme could and did take place on Sunday as usual!

I honestly feel that important and worthwhile work – meeting both the spiritual and the physical needs of those who attend the meetings in Riga – is being done. But as with everything else it needs vital support to keep it going and enabling it to reach out and help even more – and there are many more who need it. Financial support. Physical support on the ground, i.e. more to come to Riga to help. And prayerful support. Believe me, any help you can give will be gratefully received and used wisely. And, should you come to Riga to help, you will be amply rewarded. May our Father continue to bless all the work here in Riga and those doing it in His Name
Denis Leverett – Chelmsford

Please note – the present Winter Feeding Programme comes to an end on 25th March, when Andy & Mel Downton, and Mike and Vanessa Boler return home after doing the marvellous work that they have done since the beginning of January. It would be a great shame if the momentum of this good work comes to an end when they depart, as the needs of these people – preaching to them and feeding them is ongoing throughout the year. If you are able to come to Riga for two months or more to be a mainstay for this rewarding and valuable work, please contact meldownton@btopenworld.com or vanessaboler@yahoo.co.uk so that arrangements for accommodation etc can be put in place

RWANDA

Brother Omar has sent us a more detailed testimony. We recently invited your prayers for our brother's witness in the jungles of Central Africa, in a remote part of Rwanda. Please pray for him there, so that the Gospel goes to the furthest and remotest parts of the earth and thus hastens the Lord's return:

"I was born and raised in a Muslim family. When I was a student in the National University of Rwanda, I happened to come across your website and read more about Christadelphian beliefs. Since then the idea of becoming a fervent Christian started haunting me and after reading Bible Basics from cover to cover, I finally got baptized by Duncan & Cindy Heaster in Kigali, Rwanda in 2007. To me your website was and is stirring and uplifting. May the Lord bless you abundantly for your labor in Christ as you endeavor to win souls to Him. In fact, I am a secondary teacher of History and General Paper. The latter subject matter has a chapter that deals with Values and Principles of a Purpose Driven Citizen. For teaching that course, I am allowed to use any resources provided I do not stray from the context. I then decided to use the Holy Bible and the Bible Basics I have been sent. However, I also am still a Bible student desiring further assistance of some printed materials or any other resources like tapes/cassettes, CDs, DVDs... which cover a number of biblical subjects. This will enable me to conduct my lessons effectively in two ways: morally and spiritually both for me and my students and I am deadly serious. Another thing is that I would like to be an evangelist to Muslim relatives on a voluntary basis. So you understand that I need to be fully equipped spiritually in the matter so that people will receive the message. In The Gospel News vol. 25, No. 5 of Sep-Dec 2013, you published that our Head teacher had promised to project the DVD about the Real Devil. I now want to let you know that he did it and the viewing audience in the main hall was around 123 students and teachers. And when the NEV New Testaments in French came to consolidate the Christadelphian beliefs they are adopting, the experience was really engaging. I am trying to see those who are willing to be baptized, but as you know, such a decision is not an easy matter especially when it comes to changing faith. May God continue to bless you as you devote yourselves to minister to us though at a distance".

Please pray for our brother and let us know if you'd like his postal address to send suitable material to.

CHINA

Brother Donald reports:

"Brother DANG was baptized at a hotel before Chinese New Year. Transportation was very busy during this rush period every year. We spent 2 days talking about the NEV Bible commentary, it is very easy to understand God's purpose if we read each verse and commentary carefully. Trinity and Devil doesn't make sense at all. But he still dare not to share all this immediately with his Christian friends, or else they would tell him that he was possessed by 'Satan'. Which can't prevent him to read Bible with commentary by himself at all, he raises Bible question by instant message with me and I will reply. I was also able to meet another brother Gui at my workplace and break bread with him. God bless "



BIBLE APPEAL

You will note the repeated reference in all these reports to the role played by our distribution of

Bibles and literature, especially *Bible Basics*. This forms the backbone of our preaching work and with God's very clear blessing, is producing a large harvest of baptisms all over the world. The Russian Bibles with commentary are being sent out all over the world, and here you can see a brief movie of brother Joe Badlu of Carelinks USA interviewing the brothers in Russia and Ukraine who do the work of posting out the Bibles:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aO5lxCGBQBo&list=UUYp5dgMyPo1m-pFlqpyojTQ>

With love from your brothers and sisters of Carelinks