

January 2016 Australia, Latvia, Bartons' Report

The *Bible Companion* readings for this Sunday include Matthew 12 and there is an MP3 file about this chapter at <http://www.aletheiacollege.net/audio/mt12b.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>

RIGA

We've spent this week helping our dear brothers, sisters and contacts coping with the chronically low temperatures, as well as feeding them [up to 115 at a time] five days out of seven. We're so grateful to all who enable this effort, and especially to Bro & Sis Jim & Anne Barton from Canada who are coming to the end of their two months work here. The strong winds and moisture in the air mean that temperatures such as -26 as you see below feel like far worse than that. Mucus freezes in the nose and breathing is difficult for many of our folk; they have to be out on the streets much of the day as the night shelters work from 8 p.m. up to 8 a.m. only. We've also been distributing walking sticks as many have had breakages and sprains and have had no money to get attention, resulting in walking and balance problems. On the icy streets this makes a simple journey quite a nightmare.

You can see brother Him presenting brother Igor with a stick and explaining how to alter the height of it; a brother walking to the *Bible Center* with one; and another with one present at the baptism of DENIS this Sunday [Sis Anne is signing a Bible for Denis]



We've also been buying and delivering firewood, grateful for Brother Maxim's assistance. Some of our brothers and sisters live in property which they are effectively squatting in, and electric bills haven't been paid so there is no electricity. There are not many hours of daylight at this time; it's hard to capture the darkness, lit at best by a candle; and the dampness and general cold. Using flash photography makes everything seem different; so we've tried our best to give a true impression; note our sister wears full outdoor clothing indoors all the time. In the background you can see the wild sort of areas some of our folks live in, with men offering drugs or just generally loitering on the street [see the two men in the right hand side of the photo] :



We're pleased to tell you of the baptism of DENIS today- a fitting finale to Jim & Anne's two month service. Duncan and Maxim had no problem doing a full immersion of a large man in the lovely immersion bath, built, oddly enough, by another brother Dennis:



Here then are Jim & Anne's reports:



This year's mission began as my wife Anne and I arrived in Riga in mid-November and is winding up now in early January. Once again it's been a very rich experience as we provided a hot meal to the poor, the homeless and indigent of Riga, through the *Carelinks Winter Welfare Program*. While these people are in dire need of respite from the cold (-21 today) and some physical nourishment for their souls, they are also provided with a daily Bible Study to nourish their Spirit. Best of all there's been several baptisms while we've been here, praise God. Our responsibilities have mainly been to provide the meals each day from Sunday to Thursday. A typical day starts with a trip to the local market to acquire the ingredients of that day's menu, most of the afternoon to prepare it, serve it at 6pm and then clean up. We are tired at the end of the day but it's a good kind of "tired" that comes from feeling your time and energy have been well spent. How often while serving the food we hear appreciative comments that truly lifts up our hearts. So often I can only think that "there by the grace of God, go I". It's hard to receive the abundant blessings we've enjoyed in our prosperous lives without feeling a need to give back in a meaningful way, that reflects positively upon the Lord.

It's not all work either. While here we've been able to enjoy the rich Latvian culture. It's a uniquely European experience that has further enriched our lives and enhanced our stay. If you're able to free up some time, please do consider participating in this wonderful project. The program could be extended further into the year with additional manpower. We are so pleased to be a part of this mission and would recommend it to anyone. You will never forget the time spent here, we know we never will. To learn more contact "*Carelinks*" at info@carelinks.net.

Jim Barton,

Kingston, Ontario, Canada

This is our second trip to Riga to support the *Bible Centre* and we stayed for 8 weeks this time rather than the 4 weeks on our first trip. We serve soup on Sunday for lunch after the Memorial Service and on Monday through Thursday for supper, after an hour of social time with coffee and an hour of Bible talks. We try to offer both spiritual and physical food as well as a warm place to be for a couple of hours each day. A longer stay gives us the benefit of getting to know many of our guests a little better.

One of my most memorable experiences was when we were trying to find a way to better serve the soup, bread and dessert item to streamline the process. Jim and I figured out that we could use a longer table to serve and a smaller table a short distance away to collect dirty dishes and spoons. We then had to convey this idea to the Russians that help set up for us. We found ourselves explaining this change to our Latvian sister Anna who speaks English as well. She spoke Latvian to sister Sondra who speaks Latvian and Russian and Sondra translated into Russian for the other helpers. Once all the Russians heard, then they all had opinions and started chattering in Russian. Meanwhile Jim and I just stood there stunned while all this went on.

It reminded us of an old game called Telephone where you are all in a circle and someone starts a message around the circle. Each person hears the message then repeats it to the person on the other side and when the last person gets the message they repeat it out loud. Usually there is much laughter since the message often sounds nothing like the original. It all worked out and the new set-up has been very functional but I will never forget that night. Since one of my concerns before we came the first time was how to manage when we knew nothing of Latvian or

Russian, it was quite a relief to find there was almost always a way to communicate - one of my favorites is to find a young person and ask if they speak English - many learn it in school and enjoy the opportunity to practice.

I have to confess that most of my concerns about coming here have never been a problem and the rewards are overwhelming. I had no idea that this trip would change my outlook in so many ways. I thank God continually for the experience and the spiritual growth he has brought into my life.

Sister Anne Barton,
Kingston, Ontario, Canada

AUSTRALIA

Replies are coming in pretty thick from the ad we placed in *The Senior*, circulating amongst seniors in Australia. You can see one response below. It just again shows that there is interest in Western society; and that a lot of folk are doing it tough in the West and turning to God:

G'day and thanks for the email about my request for the Bible. I recently moved into this nursing home and some how my old King James Bible got thrown out with other things by the movers. Being 73 and having 85% of my aged pension, taken away each pension payment to pay to live here, I have no other funds, means I just could not afford to buy one of those Bibles in modern English. I thank you for your kind offer and the work you do, I will be looking at your website. I saw your advert in the January 2016 issue of The Senior News, South Australia.

From Roger, South Australia



PRAYER POINTS:

- For the seniors in Australia who are now responding to the Gospel
- For our new brother Denis
- For our continuing efforts to feed and support needy brothers and sisters and contacts throughout Eastern Europe but particularly in Riga at this time
- For a group of people in the disputed region of the Crimea who are interested in baptism

With love from your brothers and sisters of Carelinks