

June 2024 Australia, Latvia, UK

AUSTRALIA

Brother Mark Hawkins baptized a Jew and a Nigerian in the pool at his home in Perth WA... how active is our Lord in calling all kinds of people!

Mark reports: "Two baptisms this morning; Douglas and John. Douglas has a Jewish heritage but his parents were atheistic and John is Nigerian. Both contacted us due to a YouTube ad about baptism; an ad appealing to people to receive Jesus though baptism, no matter the obstacles presented by religious groups. Douglas and John never knew each other before today; both came to the Lord via different pathways. It is the work of the spirit that blows this way and that, but always leading people to Jesus; God giving people to Jesus to receive, and people receiving the salvation of Jesus. At 15 Douglas started to look into Biblical matters for himself, but then as is the case for a lot of folk, he drifted back into a rather secular life, though the proddings of God were always nagging him. So after some years he started to attend his local synagogue and whilst he did like the midrashes, he also noticed a 'backflipping' in their preachings; a denial of the Old Testament scriptures they preached from; a denial because some of the scriptures quite obviously were referring to Jesus. So now at 45 years old, Douglas came to the point of baptism after much prayer and meditation, as also John. We spoke of the Oneness of God and how the Oneness of God is a call to be single hearted toward Him and how God sent forth His son to confirm the promises made to Abraham and David; the promises of Gods kingdom here on earth, filled with people who are a praise to Gods grace. John was baptised a long time ago but felt he needed to recommit to Jesus; "I need to die again with Christ and rise again in newness of life in him".

Both said that life is a journey "in the Lord" and whilst I agreed, I also mentioned that we are not alone in this journey to the kingdom, for "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal4:6), so that we might be heirs to God through Christ Jesus. It is with these thoughts in mind that we baptised Douglas and John into Christ Jesus."

LATVIA

We began seriously preaching in Latvia when there was no Latvia, way back in 1989 in the years of the USSR... that's how long we've been working with the Lord here in this very spiritually fruitful land, where probably nearly 1000 people were baptized over the last 35 years. Many are now asleep in the Lord, and nearly all those who are "alive and remain" are elderly and very poor. There is huge Russophobia in many parts of Eastern Europe. Russian speakers are racially abused in shops, in society, with benefits... even though those we deal with are all elderly, were born in Latvia, and are ashamed of Putin and his cronies. Most of our needy brothers and sisters here are ethnic Russians. Many are already only living in night shelter accommodation, where they can stay only a certain number of days / year and must live rough the other days. And in any case, night shelter life is pretty rough, often "Out by 8 and only allowed back in at 8". Which means spending your days sitting in bus stations, libraries etc. It's especially a challenge in the cold Winter. So, we spent a week getting around seeing them, providing medical help and advice, paying for heating bills still unpaid from the Winter, doing food shops, trying to arrange accommodation and other things. We held the breaking of bread meeting in Riga, and also got out to see brother and sisters in both western and eastern Latvia.



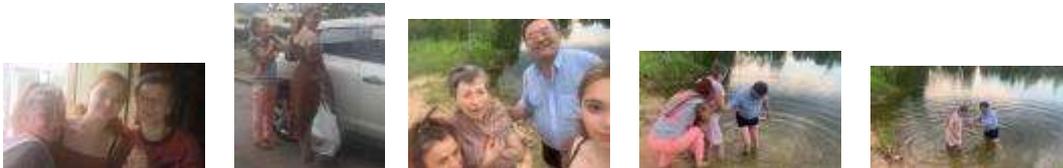
We were relieved to meet up with beloved brother Vladimir, who assisted Duncan pastor the large church in Riga for so many years. Now blind, we were most concerned that he had gone to Russia under some probably bogus scheme offering social care. He has now returned, and we were so relieved to see him, and to see his mind still strong for the Lord, immediately wanting to talk about the progress of the Lord's work and the things of the Kingdom.



Likewise, it was great to get to see our sister Irma, who years ago did come to the UK and contributed to a *Carelinks Conference*. Duncan and Irma first connected in the Soviet years of the USSR and Irma baptized herself initially, until able to meet Duncan and be baptized in person. So, she has walked in the Lord Jesus for well over 30 years, always such a faithful attender, supporter and translator of hundreds of thousands of words into both Russian and Latvian. Every time you go to see her, there is the bread and wine on the table ready for the memorial meeting... and a coffee. And that hasn't changed. She is very deaf and visually impaired and asked us to pray she doesn't totally lose her sight as she so wants to be able to continue reading the Bible. Sisters like Irma encourage us that all is worth it and the work has produced spiritual fruit that remains.



We spent some time in Eastern Latvia visiting brothers and sisters originally from Riga who have found places to live in abandoned wooden homes in the depopulated villages near the Russian border. The economy is dire here, there are no younger people around, all have left. Many homes are just left abandoned. Evija and Duncan spent some there to meet our dear ones there who are doing it so hard what with everything going on in the world smashing the Latvian economy yet further. We did a food shop for sister Sandra which made her so happy, then we took SVTELANA to a lovely lake and baptized her. She will find Winter so hard; her ancient wooden windows are so decayed, and you can see the sky through the gap in her back door. Plenty of heat loss. And so hard in the middle of nowhere to find any tradesmen to fix things up. So, there is looming a lot of work for the Lord, pastorally and preaching wise, in Eastern Latvia.



UK

We reported last week how our beloved brother Spiro was attacked by a Muslim gang whilst preaching in Croydon, south London last week. They kicked him to the ground and knocked him unconscious, badly damaging his knee cap, and threatened to murder him if he doesn't stop preaching. He has been at home with his leg up most of the time, just hobbling around the house. He is absolutely determined to go on. This is not just bravado, this is Spiro. Those of us who know him, know that he lives to preach the Lord Jesus. We had a video of his message to us all, in which he also explains what happened, at least up to the point when he lost

consciousness... all who love the Lord will find it very inspiring. Do give it a listen and pray for our brother,

<https://youtu.be/c1bWzX-ke40>

He is healing but still in a lot of pain and inconvenience.



On Sunday, we had another typically great session at The Orchard Pub in Croydon, and afterwards we had TIFFANY back home and she was baptized in Marcus's bath tub. What an emotional afternoon! She was in tears of relief and joy having searched for baptism into the Lord Jesus for so long. Tiffany's originally from the USA and had been through Catholics, Southern Baptists, the lot. She explained how one good thing she took from her journey was the need to read the Bible. But in the UK likewise she didn't find anyone who was simply, straight up following the Bible without nuances and terms and conditions attached. It was such a joyful and emotional baptism.

Video at <https://youtu.be/KW6fuMkKN-s>

Brother Marcus was in good form, both at the pub and at the baptism service and baptism in his bath tub...

his words to Tiffany are at <https://youtu.be/Mwbu1TwomE0>



PRAYER POINTS

- For our ethnic Russian brothers and sisters in Latvia and other parts of Europe
- For those recently baptized
- For sustainable ways to help our brothers and sisters in Latvia longer term
- For those in rural poverty in Latvia and elsewhere
- Thanksgiving for God's huge blessing upon His work, our work, over the decades
- For deaf sister Irma not to go blind so she may continue reading God's word

With love from your brothers and sisters of Carelinks