

March 2014 Greece, Russia, China, Winter Welfare, Trevor Routledge Report, Conference

The *Bible Companion* readings for this Sunday include Luke 15 and there is an MP3 about this chapter at <http://www.aletheiacollege.net/audio/lk15.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

GREECE

We mentioned in a Carelink a few weeks ago that our Iranian brother 'Simon' is one of the many Iranians who have been imprisoned in Greece for being there without documents, having fled persecution in Iran. We spoke again with him by telephone- he sometimes has access to a cell phone in his cell- and tried to encourage him and four of the English brothers and sisters currently working at the *Riga Bible Center* sung the song 'Jehovah Jireh' to him. You can hear the conversation with him and see our conversation with him

at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ERIU8OBiUdo> . Let us know if you or a similar group would like to similarly encourage our brother. During the conversation [as recorded on the movie] our brother asked us if we can all email and especially fax support letters for him to the Greek asylum authorities. Please contact us at info@carelinks.net if you would like the fax number, email and name of our brother.

The conditions under which Greece is holding the Iranians are truly awful - Greece is bankrupt and simply can't cope with all the people pouring over their borders. This is from a report at <http://www.worldcrunch.com/culture-society/a-visit-to-the-quot-greek-guantanamo-quot-immigration-asylum-detention-camp/c3s13092/#.UysqwYVCxgk> "Over the last three years, Greece has been condemned 11 separate times by the European Court of Human Rights for the conditions of undocumented immigrants detained by the state... Prisoners linger behind high fences topped with barbed wire.. housed in large buildings with dormitories shared by some 70 to 80 people. ... Clothes hang from the window bars. A pair of trousers is in shreds on the barbed wire... "This is a new Guantánamo," one African says through the bars... "Some of the guys here with us are crazy, and there are no psychiatrists" adds a man from Congo. "At night, we're scared." ... On July 9, Amnesty International's Jezerca Tirani presented a report on how refugees were being mistreated: "When we visited the refugees in those cells, we could hardly believe we were still in Europe," Tirani said... 60 people had to share one shower and one toilet, and the detainees were regularly insulted by police officers. "They would refuse to give us soap. They wouldn't let us out. They were wearing [surgical] masks. But we had to live in there." ... The repressive regime has become harsher still: An immigrant can be detained for a year if he is an asylum seeker, and up to 18 months if he is not."

RUSSIA

With the growing isolation of Russia it becomes increasingly important to encourage local brethren to perform baptisms- and most of them have considerable nervousness at taking this responsibility. There is a contact in far northern Russia who is eager for baptism. He is planning to travel to meet us for this before the river ice melts- once the thaw comes, then the rivers cannot easily be crossed and he will be cut off until they freeze and light vehicles can cross them or he can walk over them. We'd like to fund a Russian brother to go up to meet this brother

and assist Duncan in baptizing him. We're open for donations to enable this to happen, and we hope next week to tell you how it went. Please pray for all travelling on this challenging mission.

CHINA

Brother Donald reports: "Sister WANG RONG came to Hefei and stayed with us for a week. She has just returned back and sent her gratitude for helping her come to have fellowship with us and baptize her. She knew God 2 years ago from the brochure of Jehovah's Witnesses but still did not know who exactly God is, she never knew how to read the Bible for herself, and just listened to other peoples' explanation. JW like prophesying things will happen but it turned out to be false. So she felt disappointed, confused and quit them. Leaving God for nearly 1 year (she said there was emptiness in her inner heart like something was missing in her life during this period), then she found us by our free Bible page on the internet. I advised her to read through the Bible by herself according to Bible Companion and I then studied Bible with her by chat on QQ when I was free from work in the evenings. Geographical isolation made her uncomfortable and she doesn't like to be isolated as the Bible tells us not to give up meeting together, so she asked if we can help her come to feel the atmosphere of fellowship and was quite thrilled when we agreed. She promised to preach to younger female contacts in her area".



We have to remind you that the *New Testament with commentary and Bible Basics* our sister is holding is one of the last we have- those printed have all been distributed. We are open to donations to enable us to print the entire *Bible in Chinese including brief commentary and Bible Basics* at the back. The cost is significant and this project is really open to your generosity. There are tax breaks available for tax payers in either the USA or UK. Let us know if you'd like to learn more about that.

WINTER WELFARE

We've been pleased to have in **Riga** this week br Trevor & Sis Alison Routledge from the Knowle & Dorridge Christadelphian ecclesia in the UK. They have again demonstrated what it's possible to do without knowing Russian or Latvian. Trevor and Alison ran their presentations through Google Translate, then ran the result back into English to iron out obvious errors, and then a Russian sister [who doesn't know English] read out the Google Translate output in Russian, correcting any grammatical errors as she did so:



There's really great potential here for brothers and sisters of all talents to come and trade those talents- cooking, cleaning, speaking, sharing, building, painting. Let us know if you'd like to get involved. You can see 30 minutes or so of Trevor & Alison's presentations and music recorded at <http://youtu.be/S23x18QikWQ>

We're pleased to report this week the baptism of two very different sisters; DZINTRA, wife of brother Yuri (seen here with her husband, and drying her hair with the hair dryer we now have at the hall); and ELINA, an invalid with a withered arm who lives largely on the streets. Her baptism service was likely the time when even on earth, she had never had so much fuss made of her in

her life [not to mention all the Heavenly rejoicing]. Here's Vanessa graciously ending Elina's special moment by drying her hair- you can see sis. Elina's bread bag on the table, part of the left over food we gave her after the feeding scheme:



We continue getting around trying to help our most needy brothers and sisters. Some can only stay in the night shelters for about 280 / 365 days each year, and this means that in the Winter [when everyone wants to be inside because of the cold] some have no 'days' left. They can however stay there if they pay just over 2 Euros / night. Seeing they have no income this is also hard, so we have been assisting with this in a few cases. It is too bad if sisters in their 70s struggling with high blood pressure and other issues, women who worked all their working lives, are now let down by the system and are basically told to sleep on the streets in the snow.

Those with communicable diseases [especially TB and HIV] aren't allowed in the night shelters. So those most in need of assistance are totally failed. So many of our members have TB. A chorus of coughs goes on throughout our meetings. We delivered food to two of our most needy members who are living under the stairs in a deserted building. Access is only through a loose window in the building- here you can see Trevor and Alison climbing in and out, over the slippery snow-clad window ledge, and passing food and water to our brother and sister who are living in there [both have communicable diseases]. Not much fun living in such a snow covered building without heating, running water or toilet facilities.



Brother Trevor reports as follows:

" Life at home is busy and I tend to take a day at a time, so preparation for Riga was limited. As we set off for Riga I had not looked at any books on Latvia or spoken to people about their experiences and so had little idea of what to expect. We had volunteered to help in a 'soup kitchen' for a week but as time grew closer I had become aware there was rather more to it. I have done some work with people in difficult places and so was not entirely unaware of possible scenarios we may meet. However, now we were off to a land we knew little about, to help some very poor people who spoke Russian! This was all because Andy and Mel said it was a great thing to do, they were going for 3 months and would like some help. So my impressions:

- things in Riga are a lot more organised and structured than I imagined, with a well practiced routine
- the group consists of close to a hundred people daily [many of them baptized]; they are a mixed group of people including some very intelligent and educated people
- there is a close bond among the group and they are emotionally connected
- there is a willingness to contribute by some, this I understand is continuing to develop
- the afternoon visit lasts for 3 hours:
 - firstly, there is a time for coffee and chat
 - secondly, there is a Bible time with lots of energy and engagement
 - thirdly the meal which is very orderly and quickly over

At the end there is clearing up which is a big job, here some of the people again do their part to make this work easier. We did visit a night shelter one cold snowy night and also an empty building where some others were living. Life is very tough with no real solution in sight. In Summary; the decision by the Bolers and the Downtons to support the Heasters through a 3 months feeding programme with the help of friends has fed about 100 people a day over the cold winter, taught willing listeners more about the bible message, brought people together emotionally and very significantly helped take people back to a level in life where they are better able to participate in activities and make contributions of their own. As ever, it is people like us who have had the privilege and opportunity to go out and get involved and leave our comfort zones who learn or continue to develop. A final thought; if the tables were turned and I lost everything, it would be me first in the queue to find support from being part of the community in Riga that we have been part of, for just a few days.

So a great and worthwhile project.

Trevor "

CONFERENCE

The **UK Conference** is planned in Croydon, Surrey for this next Saturday March 29th, God willing. More details at www.carelinks.net/doc/events . You can download the UK Conference program from www.carelinks.net/docs/CarelinksConference14.pdf Do share it with others. It's an exciting program, featuring reports from the British team who have been 3 months in Riga, Latvia; and also personal testimonies from some of those baptized by Carelinks in recent times.

With love from your brothers and sisters of Carelinks