

May 2019 Latvia, Canada, Australia

CANADA

Brother Jim Barton reports:

"Each Spring on the Victory Day weekend there is an Eastern Ontario Bluegrass Festival in Lombardy (just south of Smiths Falls) **Ontario**. Once again Anne and Jim Barton were invited back to present a Gospel Sing Along for the audience. This is the third year of this presentation. It provides a very low cost means of reaching out to the public, share spiritually uplifting Gospel Music and some talks to encourage them read their Bibles. The audience is provided with the words to the songs and they sing along as the Bartons lead the songs from the stage.

This year the Bible literature table was setup on Friday so it would be available all three days of the performances in the main hall. *New European Version Bibles* were offered along with three-part reading schedules to any who wanted them. Other offerings included *Bible Basics* (English French), *Introducing Bible Basics*, *New Testament NEVs* and miscellaneous pamphlets and leaflets.

There were many positive comments by people who found it refreshing to see Bibles being distributed. A few people stopped by who were at a point in life with a renewed interest in their faith, which they felt they had neglected through year's past but were seeking a way to become more involved. They reacted quite enthusiastically to the Bibles and reading planners. This goes to show there are always a variety of different ways to reach out to the public that don't cost much money. It also goes to show there are still people out there seeking to develop or renew their faith. Each of us has contacts, skills and circumstances to help others find their way to Jesus. Let each of us be mindful of the doors the Lord opens to us to be His ambassadors for hope. Soon we hope to obtain a video of the performance but it was not available at the time of this printing. Watch for this link in an upcoming newsletter"



Meanwhile in Hamilton ONT, brother George continues handing out *NEVNTs* at the old bus station. He reports:

"God blessed us with a beautiful warm night to get his word out on the street Sunday. Handed out some bibles and had a profitable conversation about forgiveness of God. A troubled man feared that Jesus would not forgive his transgressions, but I reminded him of Peter and how Jesus forgave, praying for you Rob"



LATVIA

The work in Latvia continues, and not just in Riga. Although in Riga we are continually brought clothes by the people living in the apartment blocks around the *Bible Center*, for us to distribute to our folks. And they are really grateful. It's good to see that we're known in the neighbourhood. We visited brother Aleksandr, one of several Jewish brothers baptized in the Russian-Latvian border area. This was once the "pale", over which all Russian Jews were at one time exiled from the central part of the Russian empire. Many of the exiled Jews settled just "beyond the pale"

and their descendants are still there, with small synagogues in many of the small towns. But this particular area is now extremely poor. Brother Aleksandr is living in a care home which must be amongst the poorest of any in Latvia. The step below that would be to be left to just die on the streets, as happens to some. It is 5 hours drive from Riga, and the last part of the journey is along unmade road, no more than tracks in some places, winding through fields with deserted homes with rusting agricultural equipment outside them, and now spooky, desolate collective farms. After the snow melt and heavy rain we have at the moment, the road was treacherous. Corrugated and with huge potholes and massive puddles which might conceal a pothole, one has to slither and slide for the last hour of the journey. Aleksandr is recovering very well from a stroke, and yet he walks with difficulty- and he is on the second floor of the property, and there are no lifts. Here he is struggling with his stick up the hard, unforgiving stone stairs:



We had before given him a computer so that he could play back the many audio and video recordings of the countless daily teaching sessions we've held over the years in Riga. He had made excellent use of this, and is familiar with all the readers at the meetings, and can talk intelligently about Bible talks given years ago. He listens to them all the time. But then the computer burnt out. His life came to a standstill. He felt his life was like a constant Bible school whilst the computer was working; he was listening to around 10 talks / day every day. So we made a special effort to get him a new computer, load the talks, videos and PDFs of our books onto it, and drive it out to him. It was indeed a very long and tiring journey, but absolutely worth it. He was so deeply grateful. Here he is, watching a video from the *Riga Bible Center*; and having the newer version of Windows explained to him



He longs for fellowship and others with whom he can sensibly converse. The other residents are mostly suffering from dementia / Alzheimers, or are suffering from strokes which have left them unable to communicate. Aleksandr is very mentally alert, but it's hard for him to get out. They are fed the same bland food every meal time, and there's no opportunity to buy anything. It's not much less than a prison sentence, and he has no relatives to care for him. There used to be a shop a little way away, so we drove there to see if we could buy him some chocolate- but since we last visited, it has closed down and is now totally overgrown:



The whole area is becoming seriously depopulated. The young people left long ago, many now working in western Europe or Riga. He tries to talk to the other residents about the Gospel but few are able or willing to listen; and he feels his best effort at preaching is to put our books in the small library of novels they have in the care home:



Aleksandr let us make a video of him talking about his life in Russian, and omitting a few

rambles, the transcript through translation is like this:

"I grew up Jewish in the USSR. I attended synagogue now and again, although Jewish worship was only allowed in a very controlled way in the USSR. I was an atheist, but I still attended, because somehow I felt I should. Our Rabbi used to quote Paul's words "forsake not the assembling / synagoguing of yourselves together", and tell us that although it was in the New Testament which we were not to accept, yet it was true for us as Jews. What an odd thing for a Rabbi to say, I thought. Why not quote our sages rather than Paul the Christian. In those days there was a man who used to distribute New Testaments in our area. A Jewish friend of mine was given one, on a train. The man was arrested and given three years forced labour for distributing New Testaments. My friend gave me the New Testament, and I read it. I was very proud, and considered I knew everything, and science could answer everything. But despite my pride I found myself secretly reading this book over and over. I thought there must be something special to it, if a man went to labour camp for three years for distributing it. With the end of Communism, I attended the various churches which sprung up. But whenever I attended them, I sat there repeating to myself that I was an atheist. And somehow I wasn't happy with them. I likewise attended synagogue, telling myself I was an atheist, and secretly mocking how people could hold little prayer books and read from them in Yiddish like it was a good luck charm. My relatives were sent to their deaths during the Holocaust, reading from their prayer books on the cattle trucks which took them to the death camps. That didn't save them, I used to think so often. I realize it was my terrible pride fighting against the Lord's prodding of me. I then needed a major operation, and I was unconscious for some days in intensive care. Before I went in for the operation, I rather wondered if I was going to have an after death experience, meet Angels, see Jesus, talk with Moses, go to heaven, see bright lights or whatever. I came around from the operation thinking "Well, I didn't have any such experience, at all". But I was also struck with a very clear sense that I absolutely must connect with God. My ability to walk at ease was taken away from me, I felt, because I had walked against God for too long. I felt this strange sense that "Jesus is the answer". I was returned out of intensive care to a standard hospital ward. I picked up a newspaper and noticed in it an advert. I wrote to Duncan for Bible literature, and received it. We began communicating regularly. Everything suddenly fell into place. All my secret reading of the New Testament, and my reflections on the Old Testament histories of my people, it all fell into place. As I read things in Bible Basics, I had this feeling that this was already what underneath I had myself figured out, although I'd never put it into words. This is the Truth. The Truth of Jesus, the real Jesus, and the Kingdom of God on earth. I changed. No longer was I angry and frustrated. I accept my disability gladly. I am not bitter about it. I realize I needed it to bring down my pride and bring me to Jesus in spirit and truth. My only wish is that I could live somewhere other than this, with people I can talk to on at least some intellectual level. But I am more thankful than I can express for the computer and all the talks and books, it has given me a new life".



We talked about how we would both live together for ever in God's Kingdom, and that this is no mere philosophy or fantasy but absolute reality. Aleksandr nodded soberly and slightly shook his head in wonder. He showed me his arm. "Really, I've got goosebumps as I think about it. The wonder of it all".

This is really a triumph for the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom, that a man can believe it

and feel the wonder of it to that extent of getting goosebumps. It was a priceless moment, worth driving all that hard road for. Do pray for him in his very isolated situation. And look forward to meeting him in the Kingdom, he's a Kingdom man. His testimony is so similar to that of brother Zakhar recently baptized in Israel. Clearly God has been at work in parallel ways and lives; it all bears the same hallmark of His operation. It was a pleasure to see him with his well thumbed and annotated Russian NEV Bible, and he was very pleased with Marcus's Creation calendar, which will brighten up his rather dull room:



There have been some expenses relating to all this and we are open to donations towards them.

AUSTRALIA

Brother John Thatcher reports:

"Tonight Brian Biehl (from *Wollongong Ecclesia*) and myself went to Wollongong rail station to give out NT's. The station looks deserted in these pics ...and it was....until the next train from Sydney arrived. Then a flood of people emerged from the train. We positioned ourselves in front of the electronic ticket readers - so the crowd converged on us. Wollongong is a low socioeconomic industrial city about 90Km's south of Sydney. It has more than it's fair share of drug addicts, alcoholics and muggings. The response was great - we gave out 2 boxes (72???) of NT's - with many people asking for more than one for other family members. Brian and I shared a Chinese meal afterwards- and felt pretty blessed".



A reminder that the *Carelinks Australia Conference* will be on Sunday, August 11 2019 God willing.

There will be a breaking of bread at 10 a.m. at the *Pine Rivers ecclesia*, Glenwood Community Centre, Glasshouse Circuit, Dakabin, Queensland, 4506 QLD and then a lunch, followed by a talk by brother Duncan at 1:00 PM.

For more info, contact sister Ruth Stibbs john.ruth.stibbs@gmail.com

PRAYER POINTS:

- For brother Aleksandr and others liked him, trapped in care homes which are little more than prison regimes
- For all the people reading the Bibles and New Testaments they've been given in Canada and Australia
- For all those considering baptism at this time

With love from your brothers and sisters of Carelinks