

## **Riga Bible Centre, Handcrafts, Real Christ July 2009**

Interest continues at the Riga Bible Centre, and we spend a lot of time in following up with the almost 20 new brothers and sisters baptized in Latvia this last few months. Brother Leonid's situation remains as it was, and we continue to provide assistance to the various dear ones we've mentioned in previous messages. We've been very blessed to have Sister Abi van Heerden from South Africa, Brother Josh Thurlow and Sister Belinda Burns from Australia here helping in the work. Belinda's still here, and Abi and Josh wrote up their impressions below:

"Our first impression of Riga was how evident Latvia's Soviet past can be seen on just about every corner, from the apartment blocks to the utilitarian architecture. Having said that, the atheism of the former regime has dissolved and the gospel is being spread. In the last 2 months (coincidentally since the opening of the new hall) approximately 20 new brothers and sisters have been baptized into Christ. Some of the new brothers and sisters have been attending bible lessons for the past 2 – 3 years down at the women's shelter, and those who have the means to attend, come to regular meetings at the hall. The brothers and sisters who are currently staying in the homeless shelter do not receive food, only one cup of tea morning and night. They receive a small pension from the government, about 20 Lats per month (approx 50 AUD), which cannot sustain a nutritious diet. At the women's shelter there is only one toilet between many women. Not enough beds are provided and most of them have to sleep on the floor in very poor living conditions. The majority of the brothers and sisters in Latvia are very poor by Western standards. We visited a brother and sister in the countryside, who have several children. With Latvia officially being badly affected by the recession, many have lost their jobs. The brother had lost his job and now he and his family now struggle to make the most of the food that comes from their own garden. They grow mostly root vegetables and cabbages which can only be grown in the summer. This means they are forced to store up what little food they have for the winter. We made the unfortunate error of mistaking last year's carrot harvest for dried firewood! The carrots were so dry and thin. On top of this they have to somehow find cash to pay for rates, electricity, medicines and other family provisions.

Alcoholism also plagues Latvian society. Back in Riga we visited an elderly brother to find that he had been beaten and stabbed with an umbrella by his daughter who has traded his identity on the black market and sold many of his possessions for money to support her alcoholism. Things at the new hall are slowly progressing. The plan is to provide a meeting place and education centre for brothers and sisters and the general public as well as providing accommodation. Our experience in Latvia has definitely been an eye opener and our thoughts and prayers will continually be with the brothers and sisters here. Any assistance would be greatly appreciated."

So... Carelinks are inviting brothers and sisters to consider adopting the Riga Bible Centre. Carelinks funds have been very low for the last while due to so many welfare needs, so we're taking a deep breath and seeing if anyone would like to adopt the Centre- and of course you're more than welcome to come over and visit! The basic annual running costs come to about

Rates, electricity, heating, water, other utilities 1450 LVL

Fares for bre & sis & contacts attending 15 lvl / week = 750 LVL

Food & drinks for meetings 15 lvl / week = 750 LVL

Insurance 150 LVL

TOTAL: 3100 LVL = 7,780 AU\$ / 4400 Euro / 6200 US\$ / 3800 GBP

If anyone's interested in sponsoring at least part of this...please let us know! Carelinks is a tax-efficient entity for American donors. There are regular meetings ongoing there, and a very large amount of interest. There has been an active ecclesia in Riga since 1993 and they are now too large to meet in homes. So the growth has been a gentle upward curve, but now with their own meeting place and Duncan & Cindy travelling less and focussing upon Latvia, there has been a J-curve increase in baptisms and interest this year. The work in Riga is a project with a long track record behind it and many UK brothers and sisters have visited and can testify to it. You can see a movie of a recent breaking of bread meeting there [all in Russian] at <http://hristadelfiane.org/is62rus.html> - an exhortation on the day's Bible reading, Isaiah 62. Sis Belinda and our newly baptized sister Lida went out distributing fliers around the Bible centre, and although they don't speak each others' languages, they reached a great rapport. Lida has a great gift for street preaching- she can get most passers by to stop and talk with her for anything from 5 to 30 minutes:



Hampered by the language barrier, Belinda took to distributing more fliers on the street and in the apartment blocks nearby:



Meanwhile Lida just kept at it, engaging people in long conversations just on the street about the great things we believe. So eventually Belinda took to cleaning the windows at the Bible Centre- and congratulating Lida on over 30 minutes of engagement with one man who said he was looking for a church to attend:



Here's a message from Cindy about a specific case:

*Sister Dzintra has been an active member of the Riga ecclesia for a long time. With the financial crisis she, like many others here, is finding it hard to make ends meet, and wants to try and use her creative talents to start a little business. She is really good at crocheting, and has come up with some designs she would like to sell:*

'Guardian angel'/'Cherubim' figures: UK: 4 GBP, AUS: \$8, USA: \$6



Crocheted necklaces: 8.50 GBP, AUS: \$17, USA: \$14

Crocheted earrings: 3.50 GBP, AUS \$7, USA: \$5.50 - these are really nice and light to wear.



There are more designs and colours in the pipeline. If you would like to support Dzintra in her small business and order any of her products or suggest other designs and small products to make, please send an email to us at [info@carelinks.net](mailto:info@carelinks.net). Sister Dzintra has also embroidered some general purpose greetings cards- here she is with them in the hall with Sister Belinda:



On a similar note, Dzintra and other brothers and sisters travel quite far to come to the meeting on Sundays, which means that they have to pay quite a lot for their fares. As it is, they have trouble making ends meet for food, clothing, heating bills and medicines and they really can't manage the fares to get to the meeting, even though they are keen to come. So many of them need to be reimbursed for their fares in order to be able to come to the meeting. At the moment on any given Sunday this means from between 10 and 20 GBP just to cover fares for people to come to the meeting. We also provide lunch after the meeting on Sundays, which the poorer brothers and sisters especially appreciate, which costs about 15 GBP each Sunday. If anyone or any ecclesia feels that they would like to sponsor travel or food for the Sunday meetings your contributions would really be appreciated.

Thank you!

*Cindy*

*"The Real Christ"*

We're pleased to say that hard copies of this book are now available from our representatives in the UK, USA and Australia. You can view the text online and see ordering details at [www.realchrist.info](http://www.realchrist.info). The book seeks to not only deconstruct Trinitarian and 'pre-existence' thinking but to positively present a picture of who the Lord Jesus really was and is as a personality.

**With love from your brothers and sisters of Carelinks**