

## Russia, May 2008

CORRECTION: The previous Carelink re. China got badly muddled with the pictures.

### RUSSIA

We reported recently how our brother Scott and sister Lisa Ketelsen of the Tacoma, WA ecclesia were able to baptize a Russian contact of Carelinks, sister Lucy. We're delighted to report that she has now been welcomed in fellowship at the San Diego (Escondido) ecclesia, and is in touch with other local brothers and sisters. The joy of fresh conversion is so wonderfully apparent in what she wrote after breaking bread on Sunday:

*"I have no words to express what I feel to find out how many brothers and sisters I have! Saturday I had a fantastic time of praising God and Lord Jesus Christ with my sister Jen and her husband, who is also my brother, Eric [Vortriede]. This is beginning of fellowship and friendship until Jesus return back on earth and I hope of eternal life forever. I am the most happy person in the world!!! Today I attend for the first time service of San-Diego ecclesia were I was welcomed with open arms. I feel that I found my home. Everyone was treating me like long time sister. The service was great! I really like it. I hope I will continue study and worship God with them. I want to thank God for hearing and answering our prayers, I want to thank you my brothers and sisters for all work that you have done for me and for God! Love every one. Yahweh bless you forever!*

*Sister Lucy"*

Meanwhile, the Gospel continues to spread in Russia itself. It was a pleasure to spend a week getting round visiting many faithful brothers and sisters in Russia, many of whom have been baptized some time, some from 1991. It's always a great encouragement to see them holding firm to the faith once delivered to them, despite isolation and some very trying personal circumstances. We were able to distribute the last parts of the Winter heating support, and again, very deep if somewhat embarrassed thanks were expressed by so many to you all.

Some time was spent in Moscow and we're pleased to report that the ecclesia is now meeting regularly at the home of brother Igor S- they'd welcome any passing through Moscow to meet with them. The Russian brothers and sisters have now put together an official Russian Christadelphian website- you can view it at [www.hristadelfiane.org](http://www.hristadelfiane.org) [only in Russian]. Several hundred people from Russia are reading our online Russian material every day and there is much ongoing discussion being conducted by our local brothers & sisters with interested contacts all over this vast country. Who would've thought 20 years ago that there would have been hundreds of baptisms the length and breadth of this huge country!

Brother Alexei continues preaching in the Moslem area of Kazan, Tatarstan. He fearlessly fixes adverts to lamp posts, bus stops etc. and distributes leaflets and calling cards specially printed for him by brother Marcus in the UK. He's developed a very active ecclesia which meet every Saturday and Tuesday. They are great fans of the Bible Companion, and base their meetings around reading the chapters for the day with a hymn after each. The amount of literature produced in Russian by the Christadelphian Advancement Trust is really impressive, and these brothers and sisters are great readers. It was most encouraging to discuss the readings for the day from Isaiah and Deuteronomy at quite a deep level- with people who only 15 years ago were, as one sister put it, "200% atheist". They'd clearly read the literature sent to them and are quite mature Bible students. We're pleased to report the baptisms of NINA, VALYA, SASHA and ARTUR. Nina's baptism was a pleasure.

*Photo: Sis. Vera [far right] points to Sis Nina [second from right]. Note the Bible Companions on the table*



We also enjoyed a pleasant visit with our veteran preacher Sister Ludmila Kuritsyina. Although *anno domini* is catching up with her, she continues to lead an active home ecclesia with her converts, who continue to adore and love her. She maintains correspondence with Russian speaking brothers and sisters all over the former USSR.

*Photo: Sis. Ludmila and Sis.Venera at the breaking of bread – Ludmila introduced the Truth to Venera whilst buying fruit from her on her market stall*



One encouraging thing in Russia is to see brothers and sisters baptized up to 17 years ago, who are still faithful in the Lord. One such is brother Alexei, who despite a hard life with much personal sadness has tirelessly worked to spread the word to all and sundry. Some years ago he was able to convert and baptize brother Slava in a small, remote village in Southern Russia; and more recently we baptized Br Slava's wife, Nina. As subsistence farmers they have a truly hard life. Rampant inflation has raised prices for everything, but the income of a subsistence farmer is tiny. We took brother Alexei with us on this trip, and it was a great opportunity for these two fine brothers to spend quality time together. Despite being labelled a 'sect' by the local people, Slava and Nina preach fearlessly. With much joy, Duncan & Alexei baptized Slava's mother VERA, and Slava & Nina's eldest daughter SNEZHANA (17 years old), some kilometres downstream from where Duncan baptized Alexei in 1994.

The journey to the river bank wasn't easy, requiring a long walk through the undergrowth. Dear Vera is in her 70s but nothing would stop her getting to that water.

*Photos: Sis. Vera walking to her baptism; being helped to cross a stream; congratulating her grand-daughter on her baptism*



*Photo: Vera's baptism; Sis. Snezhana and Sis Vera being charged as to the meaning of the new life by brothers Slava and Alexei*



The hardship this family live in is hard to describe. The house is falling down quite literally- it's wooden planks daubed with mud, but heavy rains have washed the mud plaster off and the planks are rotting; the window frames are decayed and it's very cold in the Winter. We'll try to get these things fixed for next Winter, God willing.

*Photo: Slava and Nina's home*



*The furniture is literally threadbare as are many of their clothes; and it's a wonder the baby survives in the unhygienic and damp circumstances:*



*They put their best clothes on for the baptism and breaking of bread- here's Anna in her one dress:*



*Sister Vera lives in very slightly better circumstances. They are very strict about using unleavened bread for the memorial service- here's sis. Vera baking some for it:*



This family is in need of significant welfare support, although they didn't ask for anything. An ecclesia in the UK very kindly donated to these needs and we were able to pass on this assistance.

We were concerned to hear from Br Alexei of the sad situation of Sister Galina Hodusova. After breaking her leg she has been stranded unable to move in her tumbledown home and is relying on neighbors to occasionally look after her. Her situation sounded awful, and although unable to get to her, we gave Br Alexei funds to do what he could for her.

Our next stop was a few hundred kilometres away, where we had baptized Brother Georgij last year. He has been distributing fliers in his area and informed all he knew of his baptism, sending them literature. It turned out that one of his old friends, EDIK, had previously been in contact with Brother Alexei about 8 years ago. Edik travelled over 200 km. to meet with us and it was our pleasure to hear a solid confession of faith from him and to baptize him.

*Photos: Brother Georgij giving Brother Edik the right hand of fellowship; Georgij and Edik with Bible literature*



Brother Georgij's aunt, our sister Valya, is in a bad way with her health but still tries to make a living selling hot pies at a bus station. She needs our prayers. She's a refugee from Chechnaya and without documents to get state support.

We then embarked upon an 1800 km. journey to northern Russia, arriving in Petrozavodsk to find it snowing. Here we met our delightful brother Kostya, who has grown mightily in the Truth since his baptism and is active in supporting our internet witness. His fiancée NASTYA had been unprepared for baptism on our last visit, but it was a joy from the heart to baptize her this time- in very cold water in a supposed "sauna".

*Photos: Baptism of Nastya in cold water; posing by a statue of Marx and Engels*



We managed to meet up with our sister Alexandra in this area, who was baptized in 2001 and last year was thrown out of her village home by her alcoholic and abusive husband. She escaped with their 3 children to the nearest city and slept in doorways and cellars. She got a job and did her best to care for the children; now she at least has a single room to live in. We gave her significant welfare, and were pleased to see that she had taken her Bible with her in the one bag of belongings she had taken with her.

*Photo: Sis. Alexandra. Please pray for her and the children*



We really so appreciate your generosity which enables us to support these cases of very genuine need. Above all though we ask for your prayers, as the one true Gospel continues to so powerfully intersect with so many difficult lives and situations, to the Lord's glory.

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