

Visit report, Winter welfare distribution October 2010

We have had a very enjoyable and uplifting visit to Latvia. The meeting here in Riga has grown dramatically since I was here about the same time last year. It has been wonderful to renew previous friendships with brethren who continue in their walk with God; and at the same time to meet many new people to the meeting. The body of Christ functions best when the members share in the work; and it has been warming to see those like Vlad (despite his serious eyesight deficiencies) and Bashir (and Iranian refugee) faithfully preparing the meals for the feeding programme twice a week. Others help wash up, and clean up. There are many brethren scattered across the country who could use further support and pastoral care; and there is only so much that can be done with one or two doing all the work. They really need assistance with pastoral workers.

We have enjoyed together some great studies, and it has been great to hear various brethren asking some very meaningful questions. In our 2 weekends of Bible seminars, we have shared on the subjects of: patience, confidence in God, overcoming depression in God, doctrinal issues of the kingdom of God and the devil, and answered questions about difficult Scripture passages. Last Sunday, we again had around 70 people attend, some had to stand up outside for lack of space. The hall can only comfortably hold 30 people max.

As it was our last Sunday meeting before heading home, we sung a song entitle "*He is able*". Young sister Anda who comes from a very musical family, and has been baptized recently; sung along with us [MP3 at <http://www.hristadelfiane.org/audio/ableeng1.mp3>] and also sung it in Latvian [MP3 at <http://www.hristadelfiane.org/audio/heisablelv.mp3>] . As I was practising guitar for the song before the meeting, Bro Misha saw me and indicated he also could play. So in addition to our song, he sung a lovely Russian song which moved the brethren [MP3 at <http://www.hristadelfiane.org/audio/mishaguitar.mp3>] . I hope he can continue with developing the music ministry along with Anda's lovely singing voice:



We also had 2 baptisms of Brothers LEONID and VALERIJ; so the whole day was very special. Photo: Brother Leonid after his baptism:



We were very touched as Bro Sergei, thanked us for coming, and talked about how he now knows he does not just have brothers in Latvia but also in New Zealand. He thanked us for the "spiritual adrenalin" we had given – what a great phrase to sum up what we all as brethren should bring to each others' lives.

The Monday night Bible class had about 60 bre & sis attend, and Br Vlad gave another talk, Bro Toby shared his testimony which revolved around finding Christ – the one who gives us purpose, and we also discussed Ezekiel 23 from the day's readings. We had found a menorah at the Riga Bible shop, and at the study we lit it and explained its spiritual significance, a symbol of the Hope of Israel, and how it illuminated the Old Testament tabernacle, and in symbol represents

the word of God which lights our life (See Ps 119v105). Sister Rita who is originally a German Jewess, and now a convert from the local synagogue, was understandably interested and we got a nice photo of her:



Glyn and Helen Pyper also from New Zealand had collected many pairs of reading spectacles which we brought with us, and we allocated those at the Bible study for those who needed them. Incidentally, while looking around the markets during the week, I observed the cost of these as being sold for 6 Lats (NZD15.00) – what we pay \$2 for in NZ!



We also had a look at the hall they're intending to move into. The project will require a lot of generosity and hard work to install kitchen and toilets etc., and we can say with all our hearts "Get behind it!". The Truth is prospering here wonderfully.

Today, we drove to Eastern Latvia to visit Nina and her husband. They are poor subsistence farmers, and we delivered firewood for the impending cold Winter. Last time I was here, Nina appeared to have had a stroke and did not seem well in health. What a difference this time. She was chirpy, active and lucid. Praise God for answered prayers! I asked Nina how she came to know the Lord. She said she had always believed in God, and was in an orthodox church, but was not happy with their way. A neighbour shared with her from Bible Basics, and she knew this was the truth. She was baptized, over 10 years ago now, and now has true hope, and grace to prove it. She is unusually prayerful and thankful about everything. They showered us with all of their own food including: homemade bread, pickles, potatoes, raw milk, and homebaked meat patties. We felt embarrassed to be taking from them who had so little. But as they explained: "This is our service to God that we want to look after you". When leaving, they insisted we take food for our journey. Would to God that all of us would learn from this example, and be as generous in our abundance. It was another example as the Macedonians in Paul's time: "How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality".

Brother John

Photos: Buying firewood and delivering it to sis Nina; Nina giving thanks; and loading us with preserved food she has grown and on which she survives over the Winter



Well this has been a great experience to say the least, the past 2 weeks has really shown me the wonderful way God works in every situation whether it be through the answering of prayer or just the amount of blessings and fruitfulness on display here in Latvia. I have struggled to come to

terms with the fact that many of the brethren involved here have very little in the material sense but have so much to give; it is truly inspirational and it reminds me that the most precious things in life are not what we can get from God, but what we can give in return; Mat 6 v19-20 lay not up treasures for yourself upon the earth.....but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt . In saying that I urge everybody to use the talents they have been so very blessed in receiving from the Lord to serve Him earnestly. So I am truly grateful to God and all the wonderful work in the Truth going on here through Carelinks which is bearing fruit daily in attendance and willingness to serve God . So thank you, God be with you, Brother Toby

PRAYER REQUESTS:

- Sis Angelika, her 2 year old grandchild died [was killed, from domestic violence by her alcoholic son in law] earlier this year; last week her mother died; and now her 24 year old other daughter is in intensive care in the final stages of cancer, leaving another 2 year old grandchild. She comes to every meeting we have... but is very shell shocked and numb.
- Bro Vlad. He has other eye problems apart from cataracts, so tests have revealed. He's so frightened of losing his sight. As he's emerging as such a key brother in this growing ecclesia, both in cooking and ministering the Word of life, he really needs his sight. Please pray something can be done.

With love from your brothers and sisters of Carelinks