

Winter Heating Project: Siberia 2005/2006

Efforts to help brothers and sisters living in poverty during the Winter months continue, with much appreciation being expressed all around. The latest project we'd like to report on was a visit to our brethren and sisters in far northern Siberia. Here, temperatures of -40 are common. People were moved into these areas during the Communist period in order to 'open up' new land. Typically people were settled in small villages and then given employment and subsidies to work on collective farms, which produced very little due to the short growing season. Now these subsidies have been withdrawn, and collective farms have closed down as obviously they were unprofitable- and the people left there to somehow survive as subsistence farmers. This involves growing what crops they can and storing them through the long Winter. We can provide help by assisting with building repairs, firewood and other fuel, and providing livestock such as calves and chickens which can be kept in heated barns and then killed off over the Winter months.

Our trip to see those in this situation involved 3 days of travelling, completing the final 650 km. from where the railway line ended by chartering a series of local drivers to take us various distances. This involved crossing three frozen rivers by tracks; rolling a car in the middle of nowhere; and getting badly lost after fresh snowfall obliterated the tracks we were following. With no mobile coverage and no satellite phone it threw both us and our driver to pray together.

The taiga was beautiful- small bushes, reflecting the very weak midday sun. Here are some photos of the landscape- the picture of the sun was taken at 13:00 , i.e. 1 p.m. The sun gets no higher than this, and the driver commented what a fine day it was!



Taiga landscape approaching the Arctic circle

Crossing the rivers was quite an experience. In Summer, the villages are totally cut off, because there are no bridges. So access is only feasible in the Winter. We give thanks that we were able to make the journey in safety and with God's evident blessing.



Crossing frozen rivers with our brave driver

We were able to provide funds for various things.



Sis Anna getting firewood

Due to the falling water table, the wells don't work, and Bro. Ivan's family have to get all water from the river, boring a deep hole in the ice and going there several times a day to stop it freezing over too badly. With 6 children, this involves a lot of work.



Bro Ivan at the hole they use for water- and also for fishing

The Plotnikov family's toilet was a sad affair- a hole in the ground, which it really isn't conducive to use at -40 with no heating in the hut that surrounds the hole. It's obviously hard for the young children in such an environment. We're pleased to say that now they've built a wash house from logs, and have the fuel to heat it, which they demonstrated with great joy



The new wash house, with smoke rising from the fuel provided. Now the family have somewhere warm to wash and go to the toilet.

Photo not available

The old toilet as it was on our last visit.

As an anecdote: Cindy was sure she had diahorrea, and went out to this toilet at -38. Duncan waited outside, and there was silence. 'You OK in there?' he asked. 'Errr.... yes... I don't think I have diahorrea, let's go back inside'. Anyway, this 'toilet' has now been replace by the warm wash house!

This family are really very industrious, and wisely use all help provided. They are keeping some sheep indoors, and they were proud to kill one on our arrival. They are extremely grateful for this - as now they have a source of protein.

Photos not available

Photos: Bro. Ivan with the sheep; and slaying the sheep to celebrate our arrival.

We broke bread together, impressed with how the parents faithfully do this each week with the younger children watching.



Breaking bread

During the course of our trip we were delighted to baptize a typically Russian IVAN IVANOVICH in one of these remote locations. There are no churches up here much, virtually no outreach is done by any religious group, so it is a great pleasure to be able to spread the Gospel in this dark and forgotten part of the globe.

Further, in conjunction with members of the Moscow ecclesia, we witnessed the baptism of another IVAN in Moscow on the way home.

We give thanks to our Father, and to you, and our brethren and sisters in those isolated areas likewise thank you from their hearts for your support.

With love from your brothers and sisters of CCM