

Winter Heating, Various December 2008

We're delighted to announce that Brother Sam Bradley's sponsored paddle for the Carelinks Winter Appeal went off very well. Thanks to all who sponsored him! His brother Matt accompanied him by canoe, with father Rick and others on the land. It was truly a marathon achievement to paddle such a long way and keep going a whole day. And Sam's keen to repeat it next year, God willing! You can see a report and pictures of it at <http://www.tacomaecclesia.net/sampad.htm>

We've kept up our Winter assistance program, and there are more and more calls upon it. The financial crisis has really bitten in many parts of Eastern Europe. In Latvia, the now bankrupt Government have reduced all public salaries by 15% from January, and many private firms have followed suite. Welfare support for pensioners and handicapped has also been affected; whilst as factories close and even food has to be imported, prices are rising. Heating and transport have almost doubled in cost. Stores and restaurants are now relatively empty compared to what they previously were, and often we hear of brethren losing their jobs as their employers bankrupt. Many of our elderly sisters are having to spend most of their pensions on heating bills and we're regularly helping out with food, clothing and utilities payments.

Take one example, from a family recently visited.

Brother Konstantin [Kostya] has worked for several years as a cook in a town in Eastern Latvia. He is 26, married to Tanya, 22 years old, with a newborn baby of 3 months old. He has lost his job and there is no other work and currently no social support. They have no land and their families are unable to assist them. They live in one room of a large apartment, sharing a toilet and water pipe with the people who live in the other rooms, most of whom are alcoholics and petty criminals. The tennants have paid no communal utilities recently and so their hot water and heating has been turned off.

Kostya and Tanya have been paying their electric bills until recently, and so they still have electricity turned on. Their tiny room has one weak electric light bulb, and to keep warm they have a small electric blow heater. They have an electric hot plate on which all cooking is done. They are living on bread and tea at the moment.

Here are some pictures of their small electric hotplate- this is the sole cooking facility they have, and they have no water in the room. You can see their Bible in the background on the table:



We were able to give them various forms of help, including stuff for the baby, a warm Winter coat and blankets, hand produced by some sisters, in which they wrapped the baby. They have one single bed for the three of them. You can see the damp coming through the walls on this photo:



For heating they have one small electric blow heater; washing and drying clothes is a major problem in Winter:



For two years, Kostya has been teaching Tanya, and this financial crisis has made her think more deeply, and we were delighted to baptized her into the Lord Jesus. Meanwhile we're praying for Kostya to find work, although there are now so many unemployed. It's the first time he's been unemployed since entering the workforce at 17. We were really encouraged by his faith and the way that the habit of daily Bible reading has brought his wife to the Truth.

Meanwhile, help is being given to several other such cases. And the level of interest in the Truth from all over continues unabated, even increasing. Bible Basics is now available in around 60 languages- we're now producing just a few hard copies in Indonesian, thanks to the translation efforts of our brethren there, and any who'd like a copy are welcome to contact us. Truly the true Gospel is going forth into all the earth, and next week we hope to report more baptisms, Lord willing. We also continue to deal with issues with our Iranian, Iraqi and Kurdish refugee brethren as they suffer the wrath of an increasingly militant Islam against the true Israel of God. We're currently involved in trying to assist some cases which we ask for your prayers about and hope to report upon soon.



Brother Norman Durk: "I knew a man in Christ"

We mourn- we truly do mourn- the falling asleep of our beloved brother Norman Durk, after suffering a heart attack whilst giving the word of exhortation last Sunday. Truly, "I knew a man in Christ". Norman Durk. He had spent a lifetime tirelessly working for the extension of the Gospel, and was due to speak at the upcoming Carelinks Conference planned for next month. Norman threw himself into Carelinks work, driving vehicles, speaking at Bible Schools, visiting contacts and isolated brethren, from the mountains of Georgia to the flat farmlands of Latvia, baptizing in freezing water, risking life and limb at times, going many a night without sleep when on the road with us ... not only in his earlier life in South Africa but also with Carelinks in Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Georgia.... the memories are so very many, and tearful at this time to recall them all, but Norman's record is written in Heaven from whence we now so long for the Saviour our dear Norman so loved. Several of his previous heart incidents had been whilst out in the mission field, often in situations far from medical help; but that never deterred him. In response to suggestions he take it easy now, many times he said that he wished to "die in the saddle", and so he did. May we too ride on till we fall.

Norman, we salute you. And we pledge to serve the Father and Son whom you so loved to our end day too.

Our frequent thoughts and prayers are with dear Betty and the family at this time.