

January 2024 Afghanistan, Cuba, Latvia, Switzerland, Ukraine

AFGHANISTAN

This week we baptized SAFI online. He is nursing his mother to the end, she is in the final stages of cancer and he uses VPN every few days to view our material and even at times view us on Facebook. With the help of brother Arash translating from Stratford UK, we were able to witness his baptism after a very sincere confession of faith.

CUBA

Brothers Pedro and Joseph continue their amazing amount of hard work in spreading the true Gospel in Spanish, using the *Bible Companion* app and many other Spanish language resources. Again this has borne fruit, in the baptism of an older lady called LEYANIS who baptized herself in a bath tub in her yard in Cuba, with many others online with her:



LATVIA

The eastern side of Latvia along the border with Russia and Belarus is a forgotten part of the world and chronically poor at the best of times. The end of trade with Russia and Belarus means no cheap imports, including of food, and no longer all the trade generated by columns of trucks and their drivers passing through the area. It's all now very quiet there and the economy is even more difficult than the rest of Latvia. Many younger people have left, leaving the elderly and disabled behind. We have brothers and sisters there, and we went to see sister Sandra, baptized many years ago in Riga, whose mother [sister Skaidra] comes to all our breaking of bread meetings in Riga.

We took firewood and support to her and others, driving many hours on black ice infested roads. You see cars far off the road in the snow fields and wonder how ever that could happen... and then you slip yourself on the black ice patch. And understand just how that happened. It was our joy to have great spiritual fellowship with Sandra, and to baptize AIGARS and SVETLANA [using melted snow to make up the water]. Some of the firewood had to be taken to folk in rooms up very steep stairs... lethal fall hazards.

Sister Svetlana lives in a literally tumbling down wooden house with any heat generated from burning wood... soon lost through the multiple holes in the ceiling, around the windows and through the door. Her heavy wooden door is literally coming off its hinges. The bottom has rotted away and she's tried to fix some new wood onto it. She pretty much barricades herself indoors against the cold, with pillows wedging the door closed against the drafts, and a huge blanket draped over the inside of the door. It's quite the job for her to open it. She was most insistent we shut it well from the outside as it can be shut better from the outside than from the inside. And whoever made a cat flap in that door in better days probably 40 years ago... did a grave disservice to her! Here you can see something of the door with the pillows and blanket; and Evia, Sandra and Aigars trying to close the door from the outside as instructed by sis Svetlana from the inside. Problem is, the door is on broken hinges and just doesn't fit the door frame... and we had no chance to even try to fix it up [and tradesmen are a rarity around there as they've all gone to the cities to work]

But most importantly, she so appreciated our assistance both spiritual and material. She broke down in tears at her baptism and on receipt of some welfare money, food and wood. She was

truly awed by God's grace.

There's a video of the trip at https://youtu.be/FwnxJ_nF7u8

At the end you can hear Evia trying to explain all the problems sister Svetlana faces... not least the risk of slipping on the ice when she does have to venture outside. It really is so treacherous, even for a teenager like Evia. So... do please pray for them all there and our efforts to help even now from a distance.

And this weekend there is an intense cold snap in Latvia. Sister Aija attended our online breaking of bread on Saturday, her prayer request was for her heating system and pipes which froze and burst whilst she was visiting her aged mother... and it's -24 C. This is extreme cold, easily enough to die in. So do pray for them all in that.



SWITZERLAND

Indeed the Truth is more caught than taught. Not so long ago we reported the baptism of sister Louisa near Genoa, Italy. And what a dynamo she has been in spreading the Gospel to other disillusioned ex-Catholics in the Italian speaking world, folks seeking personal relationship with the Father and Son rather than the mere religion of their native Catholicism. Luisa spread the word to Renato, in the Italian speaking area of southern Switzerland, and we reported his baptism some weeks ago. And now he spread the word to MORENA, who speaks fluent French as well as her native Italian, who lives a bit further into Switzerland. We made a brief trip there, and took Renato with us to the baptism, and again sister Luisa was present with us all through on Zoom, not only translating to Italian but giving her own strong exhortation and encouragement to our new sister.

Our trip wasn't without incident. Switzerland is so expensive, so we picked the cheapest hotel in the area on booking.com. However we soon found out why- it was 6 km. up a mountain pass. We hired a vehicle in Italy which only had summer tyres. We got up the steep windy pass OK- but then began very heavy snowing. We were going to be stuck there. So it seemed. We asked a few to pray. The snowing continued until 3 AM and then there was a strange temperature hike- up to +7. By morning the snow had melted, we ran the online breaking of bread, and then by 10 AM the road had been cleared and salted and it seemed like a pleasant day with snow just on the tops of the surrounding mountains. What an answer to prayer. And after years of not hearing from him, brother Jacob Parker messaged Duncan to see how things were with him. He had just got the urge to pray for Duncan and... just at the right time. How wonderful. We snapped a selfie that morning as if it was just a pleasant day with no drama...



UKRAINE

It was in around 1999 that we baptized sister Ludmila in a lake near Kiev- in happier days. Subsequently, various family members have been baptized, including her daughter in law Natalya. Natalya informs us that Ludmila's flat suffered a direct hit on the night of 2nd January. The night of the 31st, Ludmila had sent Duncan and others new year's wishes for the Lord's return this year. Natalya informs us [translated to English from Russian]:

"On January 2 a Russian missile hit the block of sister Lyudmila and her husband Vladimir. The house was completely destroyed. They were rescued. They are alive and in intensive care.

Lyudmila asked me to contact you, dear Duncan... Thank you dear brother for your kind heart and for your prayers for us here in Ukraine... Thank you for your help... They lived on the 3rd floor. Everything burned down. Here - in this photo, the rescue service of the Ministry of Emergency Situations are pulling them out from under the rubble. In the last photo their flat is circled with a red marker. Everything burned down in 15 minutes. They were miraculously saved. They are in intensive care in the hospital. They were carried out on stretchers by rescuers in their underwear into the cold and now doctors discovered pneumonia in the lungs. They have multiple wounds all over their bodies. Traumatic brain injury. Burns to their lungs and eyes. If you can't help, we understand everything, don't worry. May God protect you and your family Thank you for any help thank you for praying for us here God bless you" Financial help has been immediately sent.

As to the longer term, Carelinks are open to your donations for all our work both directly on the ground in Ukraine and also with those who have fled and are affected by the tragic war there. Here are the pictures sent by our sister Natalya [from the media] of sister Ludmila's block and specifically her flat, circled in red, on the 3rd floor. Fairly recently brothers Mark Hawkins and Duncan met with sister Ludmila and stood with her outside that block of flats, with her pressing food into our hands for the journey we were about to make. And with air raid sirens sounding as we stood there and prayed with her. And now what you have to hope and pray doesn't happen to you [a direct hit]... has happened [because nobody can live in the air raid shelters all the time and the sirens are often wailing much of the day and night. So, don't please blame her for not being in the shelter at the time]. So. Pray, love, pray, brethren, pray.



Our sister Ludmila was a regular attender at our activities and Bible Schools in Kiev; here's a file photo of her to focus your prayers:



PRAYER POINTS

- For sister Ludmila and her family especially her husband after the direct hit on their flat in Ukraine
- For those recently baptized
- For those in severe cold in Latvia and Eastern Europe
- For our work in London and northern UK this week

With love from your brothers and sisters of Carelinks