



BAPTIST INTERNATIONAL EVANGELISTIC MINISTRIES

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“Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.” Psalm 27:3 KJV

Dear Pastors and Friends,

Hello from the Slobodians! We praise God for the opportunity to labor together with you in reaching souls and planting churches. We are grateful for so many open doors to proclaim the glorious Gospel in these challenging times.

As you know, we have been doing what we can to provide war relief for Ukraine. **Praise God, we have now distributed more than one million dollars of war relief aid to Ukraine!** Look for more information on how and where these funds were used in our upcoming issue of our newsletter, *The Challenger*. You can also view videos of these distributions on our website (BaptistInternational.org) by clicking onto “View Video Updates.” Through these distributions of aid, many have opened their hearts to the Word of God and received Christ. Therefore, we are seeing a great harvest of souls. Though our churches have lost many, many members who have fled Ukraine, new converts continue to flow into our churches. In fact, some churches are fuller than they were before the war!

Many ask how the war is affecting our Russian national missionaries. Obviously, they cannot discuss this in any communications we have. Recently our government has urged all Americans to leave Russia, saying that they could face arbitrary arrest or harassment by Russian law enforcement agencies and may be conscripted to fight in Ukraine. Therefore, we made arrangements to meet with them in a nearby neutral country so we could learn more about their situation as well as support and encourage them in their challenging ministries during these difficult times. We have now returned after enjoying a fruitful time with our Russian brethren. Our Russian church planters are grateful for the support and prayers they are receiving. Here’s what we can share from our Russian brethren:

1. Conditions vary; in some areas the authorities are harassing churches. One of our men was subjected to a police investigation when the authorities broke into the church and made copies of every hard drive and conducted a destructive search of the premises. They said, “We noticed that you have children attending your church. Therefore, we need to investigate you to make sure you are not doing anything evil to the children!” In other places the churches are enjoying more freedom and are not being harassed. In some cases, the authorities even give permission to hold outdoor meetings on special holidays. They are even able to hand out Gospel literature.
2. In both situations, churches continue with their ministries and are reaching souls for Christ. In fact, brother Pavel Rumachik reports his church has grown so much that the congregation has outgrown their building’s second addition. They now face the task of further expansion. Our February Video update features a lengthy report from brother Pavel from the Moscow area. If you are not receiving our monthly video updates, please contact us so we can add you to our video updates e-mail list.
3. No members of our circle of Russian churches have been conscripted to fight in the war. If they were, it is almost certain they would not take up arms. They have a long history of refusing to take up arms even when drafted into the military. This is what many of our Russian brethren have been persecuted for in the past.
4. They report that most Russians believe the Russian media, which is controlled by Putin and has been effective in promoting his view. But while most Russians believe their media, there is a growing minority that oppose the war, which is dangerous to do outwardly. So their voices are largely silent. These are people who rely more on the internet rather than the Russian media for information.
5. Among Christians the opposite is true. Most Christians do not believe their media. They have not forgotten the history of their government and media lying. They remember the days when their media broadcast that they practiced child sacrifice and other slanders.

Finally, we heard about an incident that says much about our Russian brethren. This comes from Siberia, where we continue in a church building program that Pavel reports on in his video. These Siberian brethren heard that a Ukrainian church needed help rebuilding after their building in Eastern Ukraine was badly damaged from the war. Because their roof was very steep, they needed specialists suited for this task. It just so happens that our Siberian brethren have that ability. They immediately decided to help. As they traveled, they met a young Russian who was also traveling in the same direction. But while they were traveling to help Ukrainians, this man who believed the Russian media was traveling to join the fight against the Ukrainians. Somehow in their discussions our brethren convinced this young man to delay his plan a little by first going with them to help with the construction. They pointed out that time spent observing the situation in Ukraine firsthand would give him a better understanding of what was really going on. As this young Russian labored together with these believers, he responded to the Gospel they shared and was saved! Furthermore, as he saw and heard firsthand reports of what the Russian military was doing in Ukraine, he turned against the war. So, God used these brethren to not only save this young man’s life but even more importantly, to save his soul. Praise God!

The Slobodians