



**November-December 2017**

*But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Micah 5:2*

**Dear Pastors and Friends,**

Christmas greetings from the Slobodian's. As we celebrate the wonder of our Savior's birth during this special time of year, we extend to you our wishes for a blessed Christmas and wonderful New Year.

Looking back over this past year we have much to be thankful for. This year building programs were completed in several locations bringing the total number of church building programs completed by BIEM to 51. One of the factors that has helped in this area is that the economies in Russia, Ukraine, and the surrounding areas have taken a negative downturn which has weakened their currency and strengthened the dollar. Therefore, when it comes to building churches, the cost of materials and labor has been a bargain, and we have been able to do more with less.

These economic problems are related to political and social struggles like the war along the Eastern border of Ukraine and sanctions from the West. One silver lining to all this has been that people are more open to spiritual truth as they become more and more disappointed with political leaders. As always in history, we see that hard times make people more open to the Gospel in our fields of ministry. One area where we have especially seen this was in this year's camping programs which brought in over 3,600 campers with over 600 salvation decisions. These figures are a great increase from what we have seen before. Praise God for such a harvest of souls!

Another great blessing this past year is that we were able to send two container shipments to Ukraine! Altogether these shipments represent about 25 tons of aid and equipment which not only helps the needy which our churches reach out to but also furnished new churches with chairs, pews, tables, pulpits, piano's and other musical instruments. The current issue of our newsletter, *"The Challenger"* has an article entitled, "Cargoes of Love" that features these projects and shares how they are making an impact.

The Christmas season provides some of our best opportunities for evangelism as many of our church planters conduct special outreaches which enable them to share the Gospel and distribute Scriptures. Please pray for these efforts. Please also pray for Oleg, one of our Russian church planters who has just experienced some serious persecution as his church was raided by the authorities. Under the guise of looking for a missing child they broke into the church and searched it making copies of every document and every file on all of the church computers. This not only created a large expense due to the damage they did to doors and windows but has also created a great deal of concern about what they will do with the information they gathered. Since they left without any arrests or filing any charges there is hope that nothing further will come of this. Please pray to this end. Thank you for your interest, support and prayers. May God bless you all!

***The Slobodians***

