



## BAPTIST INTERNATIONAL EVANGELISTIC MINISTRIES

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*“O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.” Psalm 107:1*

**Dear Pastors and Friends,**

Greetings again from the Slobodians! This Thanksgiving season we have something extra special to thank God for. This Fall marks 40 years of BIEM’s ministry! Forty years have gone by since my father, myself and a handful of other pastors and Christian businessmen met in the Slobodian family home which was a typical 2-flat on the north side of Chicago. It was at that meeting that Baptist International was born. The mission’s original purpose was to broadcast the preaching of God’s Word in Ukrainian and Russian to the massive shortwave radio audience that then existed in the Communist world. Since those who lived behind the Iron Curtain were isolated from the West as their authoritarian Soviet government tightly controlled all media, the shortwave radio was the source that millions relied on for information about what was going on in the world and to hear what was going on in their own countries. While in the West only hobbyists were occupied with shortwave radio, in the Communist world there were millions of shortwave radio listeners. This provided an amazing opportunity for the missionary radio broadcaster—the ability to preach the Gospel to those who had little chance of hearing it otherwise. God blessed this new mission, and soon BIEM was broadcasting the Gospel in Russian and Ukrainian on 7 different shortwave radio stations around the world, targeting the Soviet Union. During those early years, we did not imagine what changes would take place in the that part of the world.

Then along came Glasnost and Perestroika, and the Soviet Union collapsed overnight. Suddenly, there was more freedom to preach the Gospel in Eastern Europe than anywhere else in the world! Hundreds of missionary organizations from the West flooded into Eastern Europe. Everybody wanted to get involved in Russia as quickly as possible. Evangelists, TV preachers, Publishers, Educators, and Humanitarian organizations swarmed into Russia along with hundreds of Americans sent by mission agencies. This seemed like the right thing for us to do as well, so Amy and I presented our board with a plan to join the hundreds of American missionaries that were being sent to Russia. We received an unexpected response from our directors which came in the form of this question, “Have you asked our Russian and Ukrainian brethren what they think would be the most effective way you could do missionary work there where they live?”

This was where BIEM was different from other organizations targeting Russia. Most had no contacts in Russia while in contrast, years of radio broadcasts, smuggling Bibles and numerous trips during the Soviet Era, gave BIEM strong, personal relationships with many Russian and Ukrainian pastors and churches. Soon we were meeting face to face with these brethren whose counsel could best be summarized by one pastor who said, “We are in the midst of a great harvest. We have laborers; our young men are on fire to preach the Gospel. What we lack are sickles for the harvest.” Their answer was clear. The workers were already there and eager to reach their countrymen for Christ. What they needed most was training, equipping and support. We saw God’s direction for BIEM in this counsel which propelled all of us at BIEM to evangelize and plant churches in the former USSR through training, equipping, and supporting nationals. As we look back over these 40 years, it is truly amazing to see how God has greatly blessed this strategy which produced a partnership of Americans and nationals that has now planted 121 churches! Sixty-seven in Eastern Europe, and 54 in restricted Muslim lands nearby. The next issue of our newsletter, *The Challenger* is dedicated to celebrating these 40 years of service for Christ. This would not have been possible without the faithful prayers and support of you, our partners in missions. We praise and thank God for each one of you!

***The Slobodians***