

December 28, 2017

Dear fellow workers in the field of God, relatives and friends:
Peace to you and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

By the grace of the Lord, we lived with you until the end of 2017. I congratulate you on this and wish you an abundance of God's blessings in the New Year!

For me and Nina, 2017 was special. It was a year of adaptation in a new country, in a new city, and in a new church. This was the year of mastering the teaching role at the Christian University of *Divitia Gratiae*. It was a year of meeting many new people—teachers, students, pastors, church members, and neighbors. It was a year of participation in someone's joys and in someone's sorrow. It was a year of hard work. In a word, it was a blessed year. And with a feeling of deep gratitude to God in our hearts, we go forward, not knowing what the coming year will bring.



The month of December is the end of the fall semester. For students, this means passing exams, writing coursework. For teachers, this means grading exams and term papers written by students. I had to deal with all of this during this month. December is the time of parting with students with

whom you met regularly for three months, with whom you have become acquainted and whom you have grown to love. And this brings a certain sadness.

On Saturday evening, **December 9**, about 30 young married couples, ages 30-40, gathered in the building of our church for fellowship. I was invited to share a word of instruction for this special group of young people in the church. Nina and I were delighted to have this



opportunity to communicate with young couples and share with them both guidance on the basis of Scripture and our many years of experience in family life. The theme of the meeting was “Thanksgiving Day: For the past, for the present and for the future.” It was a pleasant meeting for me and Nina and, I hope, useful for all participants.

The next day, **December 10th**, in the evening, we visited an unusual family. Pavel and Katya are originally from Chisinau, but they have lived in Washington, USA for the last 15 years, where they had three children. Pavel is a doctor. A little over a year ago, they returned to Chisinau for permanent residence. It was interesting for us to talk with those who like us made such a radical decision—to return to the land of the fathers with the desire to serve the Lord here. The difference between us of course is that we belong to quite different age categories





On **December 17**, on Sunday, we visited the church in the city of Bendery, in Transnistria. We were in this church last in May. This is the church in which for several years now there is no lead pastor. Responsibility for the church has been taken by several deacons who take turns in pastoral ministry.

We were glad to meet again with our brothers and sisters in this church. I took part in the service by preaching the Word of God. I spoke on a Christmas theme, although the celebration of Christmas here begins only on December 24th. But, as a guest, I was excused for not following “the preaching topic calendar.” 😊

After the service, we visited a family-type orphanage, which is located next to the church. We were here in September when we last visited Transnistria. Both the parents, Ivan and Tatiana, and the children met us with great welcome, like old acquaintances. In this family there are



seven children of different ages. We brought them Christmas presents from our family. Preparing gifts, we decided that candies for children will be given for Christmas by other people, and we will give them what is useful for health—fruit. Basically, this was fruit that grows in California—pomegranates, mandarins, lemons, etc. We spent about two hours with this family. We talked. We prayed. We played with the kids. This compensated, at least slightly, for the lack of time together with our grandchildren.



In a conversation with us, Tatiana, who takes care for these children, shared with us that the main motivating factor for her to do this hard work every day is the opportunity to witness to these children about God, bring them to church and, eventually, lead them to the personal knowledge of God. When we left, the children gave us an artificial flower made by them. We were very touched by this.

This trip was made possible thanks to the sacrifice of the young brother Alexander Meiko, who served us by driving us. We are very grateful to him for this.



On Saturday evening, **December 23**, a special Christmas service was held in our church for children who usually do not attend our church. By 5pm, our church building was decorated for Christmas and crowded with parents and children who are not regular attendees of our



church. More than 500 people attended this service, the purpose of which was the evangelization of children and their parents. The youth of the local church prepared a play about Christmas, after which one of the pastors of the church delivered a short sermon. In conclusion, all

children received Christmas presents. As far as I know, such services were held in many, if not all, of the numerous Baptist churches in the city. My heart rejoices, seeing how local churches are reaching all spheres of society—the disabled, the elderly, middle-aged, and children—with the gospel. Praise God for the zeal of believers and for the freedom to proclaim the gospel in this country.



Our church held a Christmas Eve service on the morning of **December 24**. It was a full house. Sunday School children participated in the service; their program was rich and well-prepared. They were dressed in a special way;



against the background of the decorated sanctuary, the group looked very beautiful. At the



end of the service, I was given the opportunity to preach a sermon, after which one of the families dedicated their newborn child.

In the evening of the same day, the youth of the church held a celebratory Christmas service. The youth choir sang. Beautiful music was performed by a group of musicians. There was a sermon of the Word of God. I am amazed at the ability of the youth of our church to do



everything in a timely manner—they simultaneously prepared a children's service and a youth service, while still being involved in other regular church services. And everything was prepared at a high professional level. I am sincerely grateful to God for these young people who have dedicated themselves to serving Him.

On Christmas Day, **December 25**, on Monday, members of our congregation gathered together in the church building to spend time around tables in a family setting, thus celebrating the nativity of our Savior. After eating, the participants shared their testimony of accepting the Lord as personal Savior as well as what the past year was particularly marked for them. The pastor of the church addressed the audience with a brief word of greeting and encouragement.

It should be noted that Christmas in this country is celebrated on December 25 by few. Most of the population professes Orthodoxy. According to the tradition of the Orthodox Church, Christmas is celebrated on January 7. Therefore, many people believe that the 25th of December is a Catholic Christmas and that is why it is not celebrated. But on the 7th of January there will be a big celebration in the country.

We want to thank all of you heartily for your prayers, kind words of support that you expressed to us in your letters—for remembering us this last year. We are sincerely grateful to God for the opportunity He has given us to work for Him throughout this year. Please do not stop praying for us in the coming year. We regard our stay here as our joint service with you. Therefore, we count on your continued prayer support.

God bless you all abundantly! Receive these words from the Apostle John as a blessing for the new year: ***Grace, mercy and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love*** (2 John 3).

With sincere gratitude to you and prayer for you
Your co-workers in the vineyard of God in Moldova,

Vyacheslav and Nina Tsvirinko

