

Baptist Church, Serbia Nis, August 2018

2017/18

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1. Summary of 2017/2018

In just few words “God is good, and his mercy lasts forever”! I have to say that 2017 was very busy year with many responsibilities in our Church, Seminary and humanitarian organization we run. As you all know both our church and seminary are very mission oriented, even in our charity work we proclaim Christ, share literature and do our best to meet the needs of the poor and of so many refugees we had and still have in few refugee camps in Serbia.

We had many different activities such as BTS conference for students and pastors; different evangelistic events, celebrated 500 years of Reformation, lectures every week. We also started Mission work in 6 places around Niš where we send students every week to preach and teach and as a most blessed event was baptism of 8 new people. So, it was very busy and blessed year and praise the Lord for it!

2018 started with Christmas shoe boxes and the program was led by church volunteers. Over 5 thousand shoe boxes were distributed directly to children in elementary schools, churches, different organizations and main hospital of Nis. In most places we could share the word of God through a simple message that God sent his Son for us as a gift.

It is amazing how God opened the door for Christmas shoe boxes program. We had a team of 4 BTS students who went to village schools around Niš where we have never distributed shoe boxes and they offered our gifts and had Christmas play through puppet theatre. Directors of schools said the program was amazing and their children have never seen such a love and care and gifts received. Only one school tried to stop us from coming as teacher of religious class did not agree that Baptists do some work in their school, but he had to accept it as his decision was rejected by majority of teachers.



Sunday School kids with Christmas shoe boxes

Another interesting project was a book stand at the main book fare in Niš. We organized students who wanted to volunteer and share books from the stand. Our stand was visited by many, many people and we distributed thousands of books, sermons and good number of Bibles.



At the book fare

2. What have been the highlights and challenges of the last year?

Working in the non-evangelized area is great challenge and one must be brave and careful at the same time. It is a fact that evangelical Christians are not popular at all as people regard us as fanatics. But once they get to know us they see that we are normal people who love God and proclaim His word.

How we bridge that gap between us and the target group we want to reach for Christ is a very difficult task. That is why we had to organize many humanitarian activities, kid's camps, movie nights, concerts just to try to reach out to people. You must be wise how to bring the message of the Bible and at what moment.

When people get comfortable with us and ask us questions like “Why do you come here, why you care about us, why do you help us” that is the right moment to bring in Christ and slowly step by step witness to them.

Because of the mission work we baptized 8 people, one of our students started a Roma church, another student restarted a church plant with our help. He was one of the first converts in that mission field but now he is leading the church. We pray for more results and we believe that we are just tools in the hands of our mighty God who will continue to bless us.

3. What are our current priorities and plans for the coming year?

We have started 2018 with 10 new students, so we have new generation of students to teach, equip and encourage to continue in their God given calling to the ministry. We plan to cover 10 new subjects by end of 2018. We still have first generation students and they will graduate Sep 2018, so we must organize a big event for that occasion.

Classes were completed at the end of June and I have to say that new students were so much encouraged and blessed. Some of the new students are already involved in the mission and pastoral work and studying at BTS helps them so much.

Our priority is always mission work and for that great work BTS is equipping students for it.

Beside the seminary we plan to pay even closer attention to the mission work in 2018. We have already started doing so but we need your prayers and support. We also plan to organize a regional youth meeting in one of our church plants and a kid's camp would follow.

As I write the youth camp is being run in one of our church plants where 40 teenagers are attending.

We will have a few evangelistic events throughout the year where we would like to reach as many unbelievers as possible. In September we will have 7 days of evangelistic events in 5 different churches, where unbelievers will be visited in their homes and invited for a general evangelistic event.

We are working on now to get a permit for a book stand in one of the districts of Niš, so please pray for the permit to come through. Students and church members will be involved.

Looking at the first generation of students most of them are involved in pastoral or other church ministries like working with youth, children or church planting. There are 5 of them who will graduate in 2018 and our plan is to help them get into full time ministry from 2019. We started with the BTS mission fund in 2017 and we see that God is blessing it, but we need more help to help these young men preaching the Word of God full time.



April/May 2018, two generations of students together

4. How can we best pray for you over the coming year?

- Pray for the seminary and new students we have
- Pray for first generation of students, especially 5 of them that we plan to involve in full time ministry from 2019
- Pray for our church and seminary facility as we must prolong the renting contract for another 2 years! The local government has accepted our request and are in process of signing a contract with us, so we can use the facility until July 2020.
- Pray for youth and kid's ministry. We lack funds and means to work with both groups.
- Pray for the sound system in our church and seminary as the current one is 30 years old and needs to be replaced. If you know any church that can help us or when they are replacing their own to send it to us.
- Pray for us as a family to be strong and healthy as ministry can be very stressful with so many responsibilities on our shoulders and the workers few. Pray for our housing problem to be solved. We are looking into purchasing a family house.
- Pray for my father Cedo and his health as he is actively preaching and teaching at the seminary.
- Pray for refugees who are still in our country and have huge needs.
- Pray for book stand permit to be granted

Thank you so much for your prayers and support

Yours in His service

Emanuel Ralević and the family

