



**Christmas**

**IS**

**Missions!**

Did you ever stop to consider that at Christmas, we celebrate the greatest mission trip in world history by the greatest missionary of all? This trip was planned by God from the beginning of time. “But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship (Galatians 4:4, 5).” God, through His prophets, leaked details of the trip. For example, in 600 B.C. the prophet Isaiah reveals, “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14). “For to us a child is born; to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulders. And His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace,” Isaiah 9:6.

Jesus’ mission? *To bring light into a dark world.* “The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world” (John 1:9). *To show love to hurting people.* “To bring good news to the poor; to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to those who are bound, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor...” (Isaiah 61:1, 2). *To remove the stain of sin once for all.* “After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:3). *To be God among His people.* “He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature...” (Hebrews 1:3). *To embody the hope and grace of the gospel by taking on a fully human body of flesh and blood*

*like ours.* “Sacrifices and offerings You have not desired, but a body have You prepared for Me” (Hebrews 10:5). *To lay down His life for His people, His sheep.* “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11).

But it was not a mission impossible as the angel Gabriel tells Mary when he announces Jesus’ coming mission of salvation. “For nothing will be impossible with God” (Luke 1:37).

ITEM seeks to model God’s mission and His great Commission. Just as Jesus came to us at His birth, we come to national Christians in their own cultures and communities. As Jesus came in the flesh, so we go in person to teach in the flesh and not just in books or videos. As Jesus embodied the love and grace of the gospel, so our instructors seek to embody and explain the transforming gospel of grace. This Christmas, join us as we celebrate the greatest mission ever – the coming of Jesus.

### 2015 – A Quick Review

**27 Instructors trained over 630 national Christian leaders in India, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Russia, and Ukraine.**

**Introducing  
ITEM’s  
Newest  
Board  
Member**



Hello, my name is Mike McLaughlin, and I am excited to be ITEM's newest board member. After growing up in St. Louis, MO, and graduating from the University of Missouri, St.

Louis, I sensed the Lord leading me to pursue pastoral ministry, so I attended Covenant Theological Seminary. Upon graduation I served as an assistant pastor in McKinney, TX, before being called to plant a church in Albuquerque, NM. We spent the next 10 years in Albuquerque and then God called us back to the St. Louis area where I now serve as the Senior Pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church of St. Charles, MO. I have always had a heart for missions from having lived abroad in Brazil. Serving on the ITEM board seems a natural fit for me. I am married with three wonderful kids. I am excited to see where God will lead ITEM in the coming years.

**Remember our matching gift opportunity. Every new \$ or every \$ above your giving in 2014 will be matched "1 for 1: through a generous matching gift of \$25,000 pledged.**

### **The Gates of Hell Will Not Prevail in Ukraine by Rev. Calvin Hoogendoorn**

From November 16-20, 2015, I was again privileged to teach at Kiev Regional Bible College, a school housed and hosted in the Church of the Gospel, in the town of Vishneve a few miles southwest of Kiev, Ukraine. As usual I enjoyed the hospitality of the Ukrainian Christians, their joy in ministry, and the students' desire to grow in truth.

I taught "Old Testament Survey." I addressed the various covenants and historical epochs, and also provided a summary of each individual book. My primary goal, however, was to help the students see Christ in the many stories and themes. As a result, we engaged individual texts from the Pentateuch, Historical Writings, Wisdom Literature, Major and Minor Prophets to learn to read with mind, eyes and heart on the lookout for God's sovereign and generous grace that ultimately pointed to and was fulfilled in Christ.

On the one hand, the students found the class difficult. They had never thought of "finding Jesus" in Psalm 1 and struggled with the idea of

"sovereign grace." One student, for example, asked, "Surely God gives grace because He knows in advance in whom faith will flourish?" On the other hand, they freely acknowledged their own propensity to be like Israel and their ongoing need to be renewed in God's free, unmerited grace. The students were delighted to see God's rich Old Testament promises fulfilled in Jesus and freely applied today through the Holy Spirit's ministry.

Finally, I was privileged to hear heart-warming stories of grace. And even though fear of the war and concerns about the well-being of the Church exist, I experienced students openly and confidently profess Christ-centered faith: "*That I am not my own, but belong – body and soul, in life and in death – to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.*" What an incredible treat!

I once again returned home with a simple thought: "The gospel goes forward. The gates of hell will not prevail because they cannot prevail! How great is our God!"

### **December Prayer Needs**

- 1. Praise for Mike McLaughlin, ITEM's newest board member.**
- 2. Keep praying for Warren and Jobje Lammers serving in Tyumen until Dec. 22.**
- 3. Praise that Tom and Ana Smith found a house to rent in Karlovac, Croatia.**
- 4. Praise for Cal Hoogendoorn teaching OT survey at KRBC and Adrian Das teaching Apologetics in Romania in Nov.**
- 5. Pray for Fritz Harms teaching Church History at BRTS Nov. 30 to Dec. 5.**
- 6. Pray for strong end-of-the-year giving to ITEM.**

Contributions to ITEM in Canada may be sent to ITEM, Action International Ministries, 3015 A, 21<sup>st</sup> Street NE, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2E 7T1 and in the U.S. to ITEM, PO Box 31456, St Louis, MO or thru paypal at [www.ITEM.Org](http://www.ITEM.Org). Phone: 618-939-4836. Email [lwhesterberg@gmail.com](mailto:lwhesterberg@gmail.com)