



# BAPTIST INTERNATIONAL *Challenger*

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## Thank You for the Warm Clothing!

**R**ight now, temperatures outside are quite warm. But that wasn't true just a few months ago—especially not on the warfront in Ukraine. Last winter, BIEM focused special attention on a project connected to our War Relief efforts in Ukraine. We set a goal to provide 1,000 Ukrainian soldiers near the frigid war front with \$100 worth of warm boots, socks, gloves, and thermal underwear. But along with that gift of warmth, we aimed to supply soldiers with something more priceless—God's Word.

This outreach didn't target random soldiers. Rather, BIEM offered to assist our partner churches in providing warm

clothing for soldiers who were either their church members or the relatives or friends of the congregation. In this way, the clothing would not arrive as gifts from an unknown charity. Each local church would be recognized as a channel of blessing, God would receive glory for each gift, and even unsaved soldiers could experience the love of God as reflected by His caring people.

To join in this project, Ukrainian churches submitted applications to BIEM. In each application, church members desiring to participate named the specific soldier(s) they wanted to bless. In addition, those church members had to personally

commit to using the funds provided to buy and ship winter clothing to their loved one. (The fact that a Ukrainian shipping company was providing free delivery for parcels sent to soldiers stretched finances tremendously.)

By January 5, \$44,000 had arrived for this project. On February 3, your giving surpassed our goal of \$100,000. Meanwhile, partnering churches continued inundating us with applications naming sons, daughters, fathers, brothers, uncles, husbands, friends, and neighbors who were active military personnel in need of warm gear. So, we praised God when

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Like many soldiers in Ukraine, these men are discreet with their public identity, but they still express thanks for the warm, winter gear.



One soldier especially appreciated new boots!



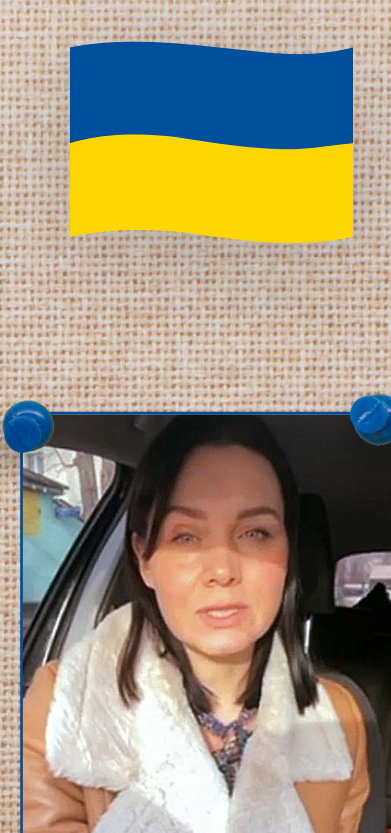
Besides clothing, this defender's parcel included God's Word, chocolates, and a message from the sending church: "Dear soldier! We, the youth of New Life Church, are very grateful to you for allowing us to have peace in our homes and to gather in church every Sunday during this difficult time for our country. We pray for you every day and believe Ukraine will win! We hope you return to your homes as soon as possible. We would like to share a QR-code with a link to the church's YouTube channel, where you can watch Sunday services and join us online. Once again, thank you so much!"



Alexander had placed his faith in Christ even before war broke out. God gives him frequent opportunities to share Christ with fellow defenders.



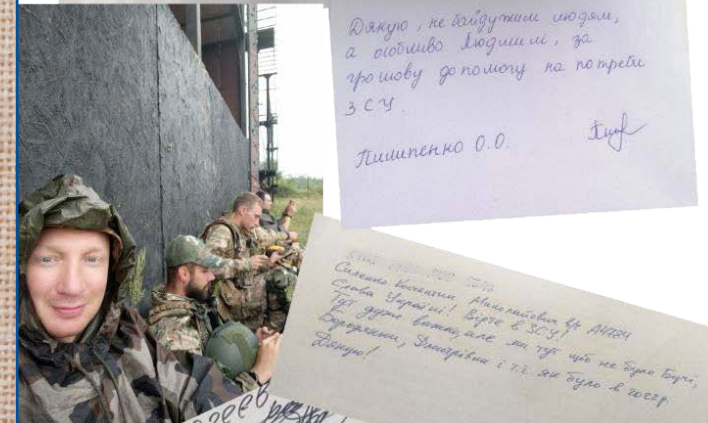
New Testaments came in various styles. Many soldiers received one with a camo cover, an edition printed especially for the military.



A video clip: "Hi. My name is Alona. I'd like to express my sincere thanks to the partners of the BIEM mission. Thank you for the help you are giving to our Ukrainian military during these difficult times, when all of Ukraine is under attack. Our soldiers are stationed in difficult and dangerous places. The weather makes it worse. So, thank you for the warm clothing you provided. I believe it will help, not just to warm their bodies, but also their souls and their hearts. Once again, thank you for your aid, which we can send to our men on the front. I'm mailing packages to my uncle and to the son of my colleague at work. I believe these will be a testimony to them that God is great, and that He shows His love through His children."

# Дякую

## Thank You



Some thank-you notes are brief, others longer. But we haven't heard of a single recipient who didn't appreciate his gift of warmth.



The congregation in Smolyn included invitations to their church.



"Good day. I'm the mother of Maxim, a soldier who has been fighting for Ukraine for 1½ years. First, I would like to thank the Lord for His help for those people He sent who helped my son and his fellow soldiers. Thank you for your sincere prayers. I thank God for you, that you care and pray for us and our soldiers. Praise God for everything. Thank you!"



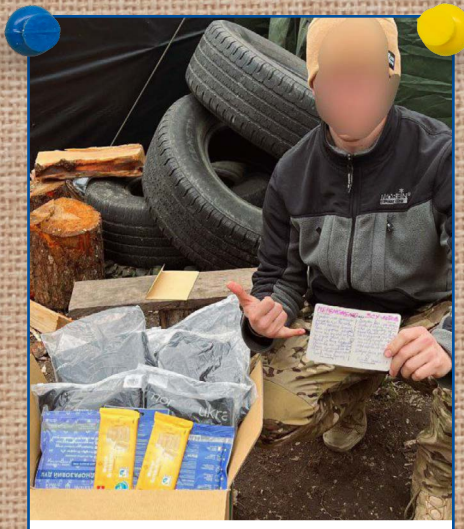
"Two thumbs up!"



We're unsure which part of this defender's gear came from BIEM's initiative, but we trust he was glad to have it!



In addition to buying clothing, one church provided stretchers for carrying the wounded.



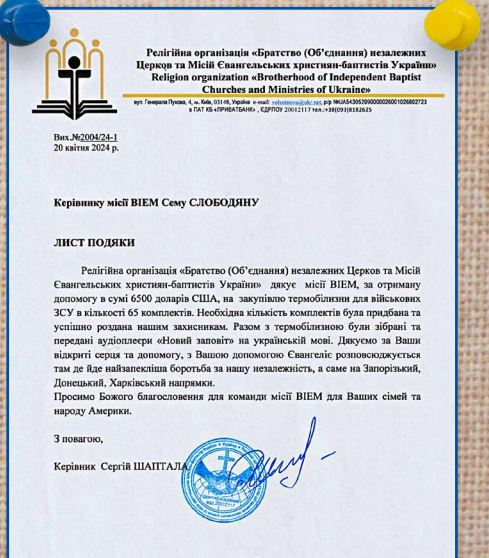
A handwritten note from home is special. A note accompanied by a bonanza of warm gear is a treasure.



Not all soldiers are male. Here, a female defender shows the package she received.



Awakening Baptist Church in Kyiv was pleasantly surprised when a contingent of special forces showed up during a Sunday service. The soldiers presented the congregation with a plaque from their commander, thanking them for their clothing gifts!



Having friends and family accept responsibility for buying and shipping gear greatly magnified our efforts.

### LETTER OF GRATITUDE

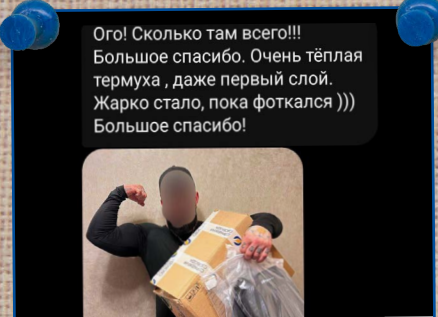
The Religious association "Brotherhood of Independent Churches and Missions of Ukraine" thanks the BIEM mission for the assistance received in the amount of 6,500 USD for the purchase of thermal underwear for the military of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the amount of 65 sets. The requisite number of sets was purchased and successfully distributed to our defenders. In addition to the thermal underwear, we obtained and delivered "New Testament" audio players in Ukrainian. Thank you for your open hearts and aid. With your help, the Gospel is spreading where the fiercest struggle for our independence is taking place, namely in Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, and Kharkiv.

We request God's blessing for the BIEM mission team, for your families, and for the people of America.

Sincerely yours,  
Serhiy Shaptala, Director



"Greetings, brothers.... I received a package from you, and I'm taking some pictures to send you. This is from the package you sent me. Apparently you're concerned that my soul would perish, and you sent this [New Testament] so that I can follow the right path. Thank you very much."



A text message: "Oho! So much of everything!!! Big thanks. Very warm thermals, even the base layer. I felt hot taking the photo.))) Big thanks."

\*In Eastern Europe, such parentheticals equal smiles.

## Fervent Thanks from a Pastor in Lisna

Your winter project is a great blessing for our church in Lisna. We are a small, new congregation that already has blessed outreaches to children, teenagers, and youth—eight camps last year, plus a ministry among internally displaced persons: practical, spiritual, emotional, and material assistance. But through you God has led us to a very important ministry! The ministry of *prayer!* You have given us a tool that is providing access to unchurched people. This is an uplift for the church! We began to pray specifically for 46 soldiers every day. The church members organized who is praying for whom. Several church members became coordinators of this new ministry. We are looking for contacts with families, testifying to hope in Jesus Christ. So, thank you for your sacrifice, which has awakened in us diligence in prayer. Praise God!

Your winter project also brought a special blessing to me personally as pastor

of the church. During the war, the issue of church support for the Armed Forces of Ukraine became more acute. According to my faith, I could not call on church members to raise funds for weapons. I prayed for God to show me how to teach the church properly in matters of defense and aid. It was at this exact time that you became the answer to my concerns! And this answer was very practical, majestic, timely, and blessed. I praise my Lord and sincerely thank you.

Most importantly, your project has brought blessings to those soldiers and their families to whom we sent your assistance. In many cases, your aid sparked surprise and then tears. Tears of gratitude for your involvement. It has been an encouragement to their weary hearts—someone personally remembers them and wants to help!

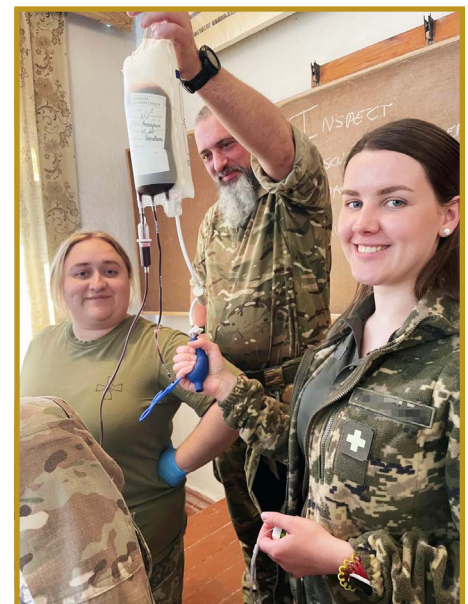
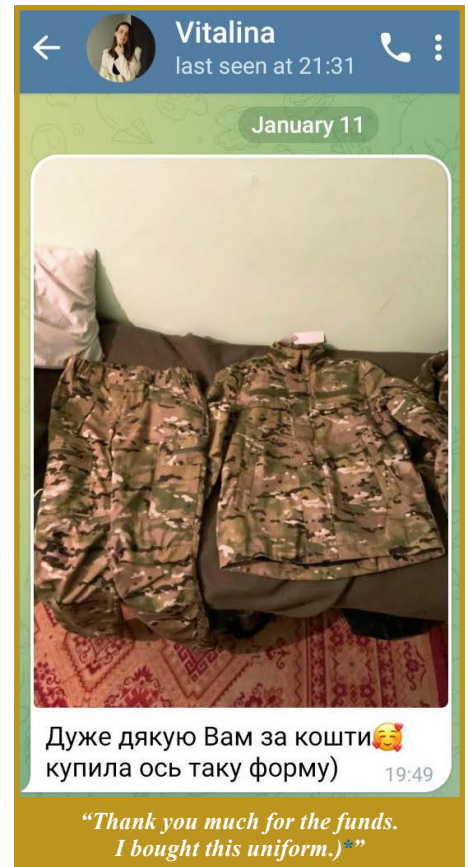
Here's one example: A soldier who had been wounded was undergoing medical treatment. He was supposed to return to the front in a month. However, he had lost all his belongings when he was wounded. The family needed to outfit him for war again, to buy the necessary clothing. Suddenly your financing arrived. What a relief for them! How grateful their hearts were. There are several similar cases!

Another example: A friend of our church nurse volunteered to serve as a medic. She lived alone and didn't have money to buy warm clothes. She asked her friends for help. Your financial gift arrived just in time for her. She sends her sincere gratitude. She is now at the warfront helping the wounded.

Several times, the relatives could not believe we were offering aid for their soldier. Some even tried to promise they would pay back the money someday. It was a great opportunity to testify about the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Afterward, we heard words of gratitude directed to you.

Praise the Lord! Sincere thanks to everyone for their open hearts. ■

*The Lisna Church and Pastor  
Pavlo Parfeniuk*



*Pastor Parfeniuk included these photos. Although providing pictures for BIEM was not a requirement, we're thankful for the snapshots we've received from both givers and recipients. Such images remind us that medics, mechanics, and others serve on or near the front lines. Thank you for blessing them in the name of the Lord!*

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*"Reaching the world for Christ since 1981"*  
Dr. Peter Slobodian, Founder

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## In His Own Words—a Ukrainian Pastor's Gratitude



*Although Yura Levtseniuk is in Lviv, far from the war front, he has seen and heard the result of Russian bombs in his city.*



*Since the Russian invasion began, Yura's church has provided food and shelter to countless refugees.*

**W**e sincerely thank the BIEM mission and all the sponsors who joined in the ambitious campaign to buy warm clothes for Ukrainian soldiers!

With your help, including financial support, our church clothed 56 soldiers! What the soldiers felt and experienced when each of them unexpectedly received a set of insulated clothing in winter was incredible! They declared that the thermal undergear provided by the government was worn out and no longer warmed them at all. Many of them got frostbite. So, how surprised they were when some “believers” bought them expensive, high-quality gear! God was really glorified through our joint efforts! Through this campaign, we have developed a wonderful relationship with these men. We pray for them in church and at home. None of them have died yet. We praise God!

We put a New Testament in each bag with the clothing and their name and wrote that our church is praying for them. The soldiers testified that it was God’s will for us to come across their path, because no one helped them but us! I have a friend, Roman, who constantly reports to me about what’s happening at the front.... Recently, we helped his battalion to locate an excavator to dig trenches for their safety in the Kharkiv sector, where the fighting is going on. To do this job, the government had given them a tractor that was

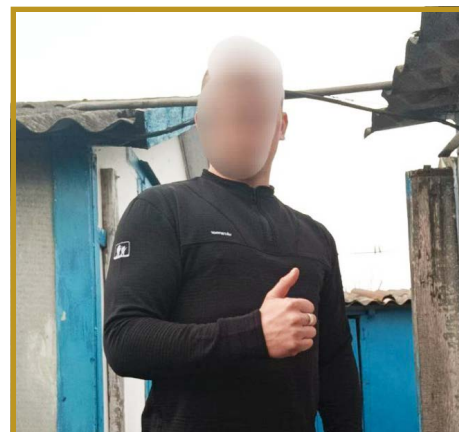
beyond repair. The battalion has changed their opinion about believers! Therefore, God is glorified through our good deeds and your donations, because without you, we could not have helped them so much.

I believe that soon the war will end, and we will be able to hug every soldier for whom we ... prayed daily. We will glorify our Lord together. Our dear friends, what you have done will never be forgotten, neither by us nor by the soldiers. There

**...Thank You** *continued from page 1*

you friends of BIEM continued to send donations for this cause.

By the time the program ended in February, \$165,000 had come in! BIEM



*In winter, freezing temperatures can be as dangerous as gunfire. Quality undergarments can make a huge difference in protecting the wearer from the elements.*

aren’t enough words of appreciation to thank you as you really deserve! May you be blessed in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

*Pastor Yura Levtseniuk*

and the believers in Ukraine sincerely thank everyone who gave and prayed for this undertaking, which enabled 1,650 Ukrainian service personnel to receive warm clothing and New Testaments.

Many soldiers (or their family members) responded with heartwarming words of appreciation. Some sent photos of themselves trying on their gifts. We don’t have space to share them all, but this issue of our *Challenger* newsletter shares a sampling of grateful replies.

Thank you once again for your role in providing body-warming clothing and heartwarming Scriptures. And if you haven’t done so lately, please say a prayer for all the unsaved defenders who received these gifts. May the loving care shown through these gifts nurture the Gospel seeds you planted and bring forth fruit for the Kingdom of God!