



## Srećan Božić i Srećna Nova Godina 2006! Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!!

Dear Family and Friends,

We realize that our letter is probably just one among dozens that you have received during this holiday season, but we hope that your eyes aren't too tired for one more.

The last six weeks were filled with surprises for us, both welcomed and unwelcome.

### Thanksgiving: The More, The Merrier

We celebrated our second Thanksgiving in Serbia, (this time without an outreach team to do all the cooking!) and two of our good friends came down from Vajta to join us. There were 11 gathered around the table(s) for dinner, cozily nestled in our apartment. My mother's and grandmother's recipes filled the table, as well as a few new dishes, and the debut of the "turkey". Neither I, nor my girlfriends had ever done turkey before, and we had pieces instead of a whole, but it all came out perfect. Dejan's mother was among us, and it was her first ever Thanksgiving! The Lord used this to work more in her heart, as she was surrounded by Christians thanking God and fellowshiping.



### The First Men's Bible Study

God so wonderfully answered our prayers for the men's Bible study November 29<sup>th</sup>. Dejan introduced the study: lives of the men in the book of Acts, by beginning with the author, Luke. About 22 men showed up for the fellowship and study time. One of the wives in the church prepared a Serbian traditional dish, and everyone came away physically and spiritually fed. Thank you so much for seeking the Lord with us for this!

### On the Translation Front Lines

At the beginning of December, Dejan was all set to begin recording the messages he'd finished transcribing in Acts. The sermons for the whole book are now completely translated in writing, so the plan was to crank out all the recording over a period of a couple weeks. The day after the church prayer meeting, in which he shared this plan, he caught a cold that caused an almost complete loss of his voice. It spread to his nose and then turned into a cough, all of which prevented any recording at all, and for a few days, hampered daily activities. But praise God, he's been on the mend for a while now and only has a mild, dry cough which causes little interference. He is recording Acts and has begun transcripts for Romans.

### A Small, but Significant, Adventure

At that time, we were also planning a trip to Vajta to retrieve a laptop that the Lord provided for us, and to visit everyone before the end of semester. Someone from the Bible College agreed to transport it from the States to the school upon her return from a quick trip, and we now have the ability to keep in touch with everyone (via our website, newsletters, and e-mail) much more easily. We also have internet access in our apartment, since just before Christmas, a real gift from the Lord. After three years of prayer for a laptop computer, it is such a "tree of life", as Proverbs says, to have it!

Our time in Vajta Dec. 12-13 was incredibly full and rich. We were there just 24 hours, but we spent 90% of the time catching up with people, and it was so refreshing. Many said it was like we never left, but just as many did triple- or double-takes upon seeing us there. The travel home was an undertaking, as we missed our bus connection, due to a change in schedules that didn't coordinate with information on the internet, and had a very difficult time trying to connect from southern Hungary across the border and into Subotica. Even the planned travel was hard for me because I had a cold at that time, as well as a sinus infection, and was pretty low on energy, so this turn of events was less than thrilling, but God gave us amazing grace and strength. In the end, we ended up walking about 9 kilometers in the dark on a pretty empty, and cold, road towards the border, before being picked up by the youth pastor who had been teaching a Bible study that evening and was unable to come earlier. It was an adventure neither of us care to repeat. Next time, we promised each other to take the train, and we are also praying for a more reliable car which will be able to travel outside the city limits without fear of breakdown.

**“Be instant, in season, out of season” (2 Tim. 4)**

Glad to be back at home, we were set on recovering physically and mentally, Dejan was excited to record, when the pastor lost his voice and Dejan needed to teach for him that Sunday, which turned into Wednesday, so that Ljuban could recover in time for the Christmas service. The Tuesday following Christmas was the men’s Bible study, so Dejan had his work cut out for him! He taught Hebrews 1 on Sunday, then Hebrews 2 on Wednesday. A little surprise also happened Wednesday, as Dejan’s mom showed up at the Bible study! She came with the lady who made our wedding cake, not knowing Dejan was teaching, and for the first time to a regular church Bible study--her third time in the church this year and ever. The Lord is opening her heart more and more, to bring her to Himself, though she is still very casual about it. The spiritual battle through that service was obvious; of course the enemy was attempting to distract because the name of Jesus was going to be highly exalted. And truly the message placed everyone’s attention squarely on Him. What a wonderful Savior we have in Jesus!

The second monthly men’s Bible study was smaller last Tuesday, with only about 11 men, but it is holiday time, and many men were working seasonal jobs or at home with their families, so it’s understandable. Dejan taught on the baptism of the Holy Spirit from Acts 2, and almost every man came forward for prayer at the exhortation, either for victory over the flesh, power for godly living, or for discovering their spiritual gifts. Dejan is encouraged at what the Lord is teaching Him through these studies and is glad to see other brothers in Christ benefit from the lessons as well.

**Christmas Eve and Day**

Please forgive us for not being able to include you in these things by sending our prayer requests ahead of time, but as you can see, the time was much busier than we expected. We didn’t even prepare much for Christmas ourselves, as far as decorating, baking, or planning gifts. Our Christmas tree came home on the 20<sup>th</sup>, and in the midst of my continued health struggles, there wasn’t much energy for doing many special activities. December 24<sup>th</sup> (Christmas Eve) is the day Serbians who are Catholic celebrate the Christmas holiday. We were all day with Dejan’s mother, putting up her little tree, preparing the meal, and relaxing. It had nothing much religious or even Christmas-like in it, except that on television there were many Bible-themed films like *The Ten Commandments* and versions of Jesus’ life. Surprisingly for us, though, Dejan’s mom was open to talking about Jesus, as we commented together with her about how the films don’t often portray everything according to the Bible. She mentioned that she had begun to notice these different “versions” and found it a bit confusing. Sadly. But the biggest surprise of all, for Dejan especially, was that she thanked God for the food that day, something she has never done, at least not in Dejan’s presence.

The next day, Christmas Day, we visited her again for lunch before going to the church in the evening, *all* together. Hopefully it is apparent now, how God is moving through your prayers for her salvation! She is slowly awakening spiritually. Traditionally, Dejan never went to church on the 25<sup>th</sup> because it was his father’s birthday, and even after his passing, he stayed home to be with his mom so she would not be alone. But this year, she informed us that she would like to come. I think she really enjoys being around others there because she never seems shy to talk, especially to those she knows from her few previous attendances. We also gave her a Bible, her first, and she was open to receive it. Please keep her in prayer, that she will read God’s Word and for His love to work on her heart to draw her to Himself.

Just after Christmas, we were incredibly blessed to have another friend visit us from Vajta with her aunt. We showed them around, did a little shopping, and I especially enjoyed the native English-speaker fellowship. Sometimes I forget what it’s like to speak proper English at normal “Julie” speed! Truly, though, it was wonderful to have people wanting to come and see the city (as well as to see us), when there are so many more exotic European places to go.

Whew! What a busy month!

**Rolling over into 2006**

The church gathered together on New Year’s Eve in a time of worship, communion, thanksgiving, prayer, food, fellowship, games and laughter, as we ended 2005 and began 2006 here in Subotica. Dejan stepped further into his administration role by planning and running the evening. Praise God for the move of the Holy Spirit in our midst and joy in His presence! Pictures will say it best. Here’s a peek at our celebration:



*A time of worship...*

*...of communion*

*...of games & laughter*

*...food and fellowship!*

## Језик (Language)

I'm progressing slowly but surely in my studies of Serbian. The grammar can be so frustrating, though. Recently we began reading practice in Cyrillic, the second alphabet of the language, in which the Bible is also written. Thankfully, going to church is getting easier--in other words, I'm straining less and less to understand the sermons without translation. And soon I will pick up a second lesson in the week, as my teachers will both be free now that the holidays are over. I would like to be able to broaden my studies a bit further, through some independent practice with audio learning (hearing and repeating, dialogue comprehension) as well as more information on the culture. The book *Teach Yourself Serbo-Croat* is something I would really love to have someday.

Please continue to pray with and for us. I never thought that life would be this busy here! But we want to keep our focus on the Lord and not allow the demands and urgencies of life determine our course. It is strangely difficult to stay simple and stick to what we believe God has called us to do here. Many things take more time than we are accustomed to, so planning can be a challenge, but overall, we are still so thankful to be here; for Dejan to translate and to assist Ljuban at the church, and for me to work the home and study the language. We really don't know what the Lord has planned for this coming year, especially if He will return! but we believe He is going to faithfully lead us into all of it as we stay close to Him. Thank you for caring so much for us, for your e-mails, prayers, and support. We are more keenly aware than ever before, how interdependent we are on the body of Christ to be in His service here. All that you are praying and doing means so much to us! May the LORD strengthen your hearts and hands to do His will in these coming days...

By His grace and in His love,

Julie & Dejan



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## PRAYER REQUESTS

- ever-nearer fellowship with Jesus in our personal devotion times
  - deepening love and commitment in our marriage
  - daily filling of the Holy Spirit
- that we will be able to have our financial support settled soon,  
for the Lord to open the door for us to be supported through a missions organization or church
- for Dejan, who will be looking after the church here the week of **January 9-16**, teaching Jan. 11 and Jan. 15:  
wisdom, discernment, and his Bible study preparations;  
time and health to finish recording all of Acts
- for the church here: to grow and abound even more in love; to become more free in worship;  
to use their spiritual gifts more often in their fellowship with one another
- Men's Bible study **Jan. 31**: that the Lord will move in many men to attend and for their continued growth
  - for Julie, solid language acquisition and patience in learning and study,  
recovery from and healing of all physical ailments, especially kidney problems,  
insight for being the best possible helper to Dejan
  - for the continued openness and eventual salvation of Dejan's mom, Gizela
- for the young man and his sister who are coming to the church but are not yet saved,  
spiritual strength for their mother who is a new Christian,  
freedom for her son from drug addiction and healing of related mental consequences