



Caixa Postal 33
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BRAZIL

Dear Pastors, Churches, Family and Friends,

There is an interesting line in the Christmas cantata that we are preparing to perform. Translated, it goes something like this: "I will never forget the night when I suddenly realized that even though it was a hot night in December, my heart was cold." It probably sounds funny to hear, "a hot night in December...", but that is what Christmas in the Southern Hemisphere is like; yet it is watching Christ defrost cold hearts that makes the ministry the best "work" anyone can have the privilege to perform. We had the privilege to see many of you during our time of furlough and we made it very clear how much we wanted to be back here at home. It still feels like we are trying to catch up from furlough, but God has already blessed us in so many ways and given gifts since we arrived worth more than anything wrapped under a tree. The souls saved as well as new converts being disciplined and baptized has increased the workload, and the blessing (see you even got a new word for Christmas) as well. We are seeing increased attendance in the services, and we hope that this also leads to increased participation and the possibility of training workers. The men have been asking about buying land and building which means that they are seeing the importance of the congregation having a place of its own. My prayer in the new year is to work on getting our Sunday School organized with teachers and helpers so that we can reach out to more. The continuation of the seminary is encouraging as among the three churches in the interior of Bahia that are involved there are about 35 students. I told one of my men that these trips are physically exhausting, but spiritually refreshing. Every time I make a trip to the interior for seminary, I return being blessed by my students.

Cynthia continues her hard work teaching the children with Morgan in the midst of his sixth grade material. Those who helped with the purchase of the children's school DVD's will be interested to learn that Aydan, Daniella, and Abigail absolutely love this method of schooling. Of course, who wouldn't love to get to "watch" TV while doing your schoolwork? The relief it gives Cynthia is a blessing as well as giving us the joy of "watching" Abigail and Daniella quoting their Bible verses. They all three love to tell us about their "friends" on their videos.

During this season, we always remember and pray for you as you serve the Lord so faithfully and pray for our ministry and family. There are many gifts that we have been given: Jesus Christ, salvation, family, friends, safety, blessings from you, but how about this gift? II Corinthians 5:18, "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath GIVEN to us the ministry of reconciliation;" This ministry is a gift from God. Thank you, for helping us to faithfully carry this gift.

In Christ,
The Joel Dickens Family
Your Missionaries in Belo Jardim, Pernambuco (Brazil)