



*For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. ...
(1 Cor. 1:18-21)*

**HOME MINISTRY JUNE 2024
DEAR FRIENDS AND PARTNERS OF
THE REACH BEYOND MINISTRY
TO THE PEOPLES OF CZECHIA
AND SLOVAKIA**

HOME SWEET HOME

It doesn't matter if we're returning home from a trip or just starting to make a home together as newlyweds.

In late May and early June, we were on the road. This time we chose Island Air Lines for our trip to America. The flight from Prague to Reykjavik took less than 4 hours. The runway around the landing strip resembled a moon surface with black lava all around. We were surprised by the

size of the airport and the number of destinations from Europe to America. Then we made the connection without waiting and 5 hours later, we landed in Boston.

OUR GRANDSON'S WEDDING

We made it right into the wedding preparations of two families whose offspring would be starting their lives together in a few days. There were three generations of the groom's family; our grandson's family, including us two seniors, the brother of the groom's father, a brother of the groom's mother and his American wife, three younger siblings of the groom, the parents of the wife of the groom's mother's brother, a total of 13 family members.

The bride comes from a family of 6 siblings and many relatives. In addition, the bride's grandfather used to be a preacher, so guests from the bride's side filled the entire auditorium. In all, there were about 250 people in attendance.

The logistics of preparing for the groom's rehearsal dinner, the bachelor and bachelorette parties, and many other events began. The first meeting of the groom's and bride's family was held in a park about an hour from groom's family home in Hooksett. A total of about 50 immediate members of both families met for the first time. Although it was cloudy and drizzly in the morning, the weather cleared up in the afternoon. The first part of the wedding was a success in every way.

The wedding day was set on Friday, May 31 at the historic Merrimack Church, which was found in 1771. The First Church of Merrimack is located on Baboosick Lake Road. A curious name, originally an Indian territorial name. The site of the ceremony was in the deep woods of NH. Merrimack County has a population of about 150,000,

with a density of about 165 inhabitants per square mile. In other words, the population is scattered throughout the deep woods. Although the distance to "civilization" was less than 50 miles, the narrow road and the double yellow line down the middle took about an hour to get there.

It remains a mystery how the son of parents who were both born in the small dormant kingdom of Bohemia found the blue-eyed princess in a remote area of NH.

The bride's grandfather became a preacher in this very area in 1988. No wonder there were so many guests at the wedding. We knew only a few of the guests from previous visits.



On Saturday morning, the happy couple left for their honeymoon in Quebec, Canada.

NORTH SHORE BAPTIST CHURCH

We took the bus to NYC for our next adventure. Crossing into Queens, we were amazed, even dazzled, by the grandeur of the modern underground Grand Central Station where the LIRR trains depart. We were pleasantly surprised by the cleanliness, spaciousness and modernity of the trains. The Long Island Rail Road carries an average of more than 30,000 passengers daily.

The North Shore Baptist Church in Queens and pastor Ed Moore gave us a warm welcome. The last time we visited the congregation was some 7 years ago. NSBC is one of the first congregations that has faithfully supported our ministry since 2001. As every year, there were 8 interns in the church and a young man from Hungary who is studying theology in the UK.

OUR STOP IN NYC

The visit to Manhattan was rather nostalgic. This time we didn't walk tens of thousands of steps like before. Our first stop took us to the Neue Galerie near Central Park, where a portrait of the Lady in Gold (Gustav Klimt 1903-7) is on display. This particular portrait was considered the equivalent of the Mona Lisa in Paris in post-war Austrian Vienna. Who this woman was, her identity, to whom the painting belonged, remained a dark mystery in Europe for many decades. It was only years later that the mystery was solved. The rightful heiress of the property, which was confiscated during Hitler's Final Solution of the Jewish Question, was granted her claim to ownership after ten years of legal proceedings. We had read the book *The Lady in Gold: The Extraordinary Story of Gustav Klimt's Masterpiece, Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer* by Anne-Marie O'Connor [Deckle Edge] Hardcover – February 7,

2012, with great interest a few months earlier. The book was recommended to us by friends who had also struggled for years with restitution claims for confiscated family property.

The title character in *Woman in Gold* is Adele Bloch-Bauer, whose husband, Czech sugar mogul Ferdinand Bloch-Bauer, commissioned the Austrian Symbolist painter Gustav Klimt to paint two portraits of his wife when she was 25. The first and most famous of the two later became known as 'The Woman in Gold'. The 2015 film focuses on Bloch-Bauer's niece, Maria Altmann, played by Helen Mirren, and her quest to reclaim the famous Klimt painting from the Austrian government, but there is much more to her story:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portrait_of_Adele_Bloch-Bauer_I

We were so moved by the story that to see the Lady's Portrait in a New York gallery was on our list to do and to see. Nearly a century after its creation and completion, the portrait was purchased by Jewish philanthropist Ronald Lauder for \$135 million (\$225 million in 2024). Since 2015, the portrait has been on display at the Neue Galerie in NYC.

Our second stop in NYC took us to the site of the 9/11 Memorial Pools. These memories are very vivid for us since we visited the grounds shortly after. In 2002, we were at a conference in NJ, just 80 miles from the site of the tragic disaster. We were scheduled to return home from NYC a few days later, but no planes left for the next several days. We spent the waiting time in Philadelphia, from where we took a detour flight to Dallas and finally back home across the ocean. We arrived at the airport with hardly any travelers and the first baggage checks began. It was an experience we will never forget.

Only one regret – NYC is very crowded, traffic hardly moves and our time was too short.

NEW JERSEY

The next stop was NJ just about 40 min. bus drive from Manhattan. Our friend Jana was one of our first contacts in the early days of our ministry in what was then Czechoslovakia. She was the first in her family to believe and got us involved in evangelizing her siblings and their families. Time has passed and Jana has been married in the USA for 25 years. She and her husband compose Christian songs and set biblical texts to music. Her Slavic background gives to the music an unusual emotional charge. Her nephew Tom and his family, three teenage daughters who have had American citizenship for several years, are a great asset to America spiritually and professionally.

RETURNING BACK TO PRAGUE

We spent the last three days with the family and the newlyweds – the phrase "home sweet home" has taken on a new meaning for them as well. Emily comes from 6 children, Samuel from 4, so we have hope to see the next generation of the Steiger family.

The return flight was a demonstration of God's caress; although most flights are filled to capacity, Klara had three seats for her horizontal overnight flight. If possible, we always ask for an aisle seat. This time, the available seats were not across the aisle, but behind. It happened that only two passengers on the entire plane had three seats.

PRE AND POST WEDDING EVENTS

June was an eventful month. Before leaving for the USA, Geoff and we visited

the newly opened Lety Holocaust Memorial in South Bohemia. Two scheduled ministry meetings and classes in Prague and Usti were a great blessing and encouragement.

Less than a week after returning from the US, we had barely unpacked our bags, when our annual week-long reunion with our long-time confreres from various parts of the country began. We praised the Lord for recovery of two serious health issues. This unique gathering is an opportunity not only to enjoy each other's company, but also to encourage each other for continued ministry. The stay was a success in every way; the Sumava region, a former borderland, has a tragic history. For centuries, Czechs and Germans have lived in the area together; the area was partially annexed in 1939-45 to Germany to secure peace in Europe. The Czech inhabitants were largely expelled and shortly after, World War II began. After the war, the Germans were expelled as part of the peace treaties and retaliation.

Under communism, the area became a military zone and most of the abandoned villages were demolished. However, the beautiful landscape was preserved. After the fall of communism, the area was reopened and there is a lively tourist activity.

PRAISES AND PRAYER NEEDS

- The wedding of our grandson and the college graduation of grandson #2 are times and opportunities to praise the Lord for family blessings.
- Time for the family to be together and celebrate the wedding of our first grandson and the graduation of our second grandson is priceless.
- Sam and Emily are building their Home Sweet Home.
- Father and son who just graduated are looking for jobs.

- During the summer and local holidays, we are expecting several visitors and reunions with friends from overseas.
- The radio program in Slovakia, Ask Pastor John, continues. We are looking forward to meet Milan Hudec in Slovakia in September, Lord willing.
- Pavel is making good progress on the English translation of his book.

*For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.
(1 Cor. 1:22-25)*

**Our hearts are singing:
Jesus Loves Me
Just a Closer Walk with You
What a Friend We Have in Jesus
Swing Low, Sweet Chariot**

***Thank you for your prayers, support
and participation in our life and
Czech and Slovak ministries.
In His sovereign grace.***

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