

APRIL 2021
DEAR FRIENDS AND PARTNERS OF
THE REACH BEYOND MINISTRY TO THE PEOPLES
OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND SLOVAKIA

WAITING AND WAITING

Monday, March 22nd was the official anniversary of the first death from COVID 19. The victim was a 95-year-old man. At noon a minute of silence was held and church bells were rung. In Prague's Old Town Square, activists painted more than 25 thousand white crosses on the cobblestones, in memory of those who died. People came with flowers and lit candles. It was a powerful experience and a time to show respect and compassion.



The Czech Republic was spared the worst of the pandemic in the spring, only to see its health care system is stretched to its limits. No one imagined that eventually, the nation would go from first place in low numbers of deaths to first place in highest per capita mortality.

Another first place: Czech kids have been forced to learn from home for the longest period compared to the rest of Europe. Thousands of first-graders and elementary school students were not able to access the educational system. Thousands of children dropped out of the online educational system completely.

As a result, we have been under strict lockdown since January 2021. All non-essential travel to the Czech Republic is banned, and there are no crossing county lines except for travel to work, health, and social care facilities. All organized activities, including sporting, cultural, religious, public, or private are forbidden. No Easter celebration, just more and more restrictions and regulations. The closure applies to retail, restaurants, recreation, accommodation, and shopping malls with exception of food, pharmacies, and drugstores. Singing in public is prohibited; the mandatory rule to be muzzled – by wearing a protective mask even in cars – remains. Hospitality services or gatherings are limited to 6 people. Most amazing (and amusing) is that tattoo parlors will be opened soon! Next month we might see the opening of some outdoor and indoor places and services. Instructions are very detailed as to the number of people and how much distance should be kept.

As vaccination goes, Pavel had two doses of Pfizer. Since we have/had a shortage of vaccines Klara was hesitant to get one while hoping there will be more studies done, or that other options like Johnson & Johnson will become available. COVID 19 is not only a pandemic issue it's also a political one in the EU. As of now, the unapproved Russian Sputnik V vaccine is being promoted as an option. It caused a governmental crisis in Slovakia and a similar outcome here in CZ. Those Government Secretaries who are against it are replaced by those who are in favor. This country already has its fourth Secretary of Health since the pandemic started in March 2020. The question is: How can Russians sell their vaccine since they vaccinated only about 10 million people out of 145 million of the population? It looks like a PR issue or a Russian footstep in the door. We hope that Russia will not interpret this gesture as a call for international help.

We posted our Spa YouTube video in our last printed Prayer Letter. In case you missed it, here it is once more:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hgGbgT2FBec>

OUR MINISTRY

There is not much to report except that we continue in our daily routine of translating, proofreading, writing, editing, etc. We participate twice a week in ZOOM evening Bible studies on Wednesdays and Thursdays. On Sundays, it's sofa-youtube-online sermons from a couple of churches. We miss our friends and people generally.

We praise the Lord we have had the opportunity to recharge, and look forward to new ideas and challenges. Once again, we realized that the most important thing is to build bridges for eternity. Overall, we have had a wonderful experience.

PRAYERS AND PRAISES

- For faithful friends who pray for the Czech and Slovak ministries.
- We marvel how Covid frustrations are motivating believers and missionaries to seek new ways to reach out.
- We have much more time to give, encourage, and restore contacts that were put aside for a while.
- We wish everyone sunshine and well-being in the joyful anticipation of the arrival of spring and an end to this miserable plague.

**Thank you for your prayers,
Support and participation
In our life and the
Czech & Slovak ministry**

**In His Sovereign Grace,
Pavel and Klara Steiger**

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PAVEL & KLARA STEIGER
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