



For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing (2Co 2:15)

**OCTOBER 2019
DEAR FRIENDS AND PARTNERS OF THE
REACH BEYOND MINISTRY
TO THE PEOPLES
IN CZECHIA AND SLOVAKIA**

COLORFUL FALL

Our September highlight was the Ladies retreat in Slovakia. Travel distance from Prague to the Tatra Mountains is about 500 km, but getting from point A to point B becomes a challenge. To avoid the freeway nightmare as much as possible we decided to drive one day early and make a few stops along the way. For years, we have passed the historic Moravian town of Mikulov located directly on the border with Austria. From 1948 to 1989, the Czech people could see the free world through the iron curtain.

**MIKULOV CASTLE AND
DIETRICHSTEIN FAMILY TREE**

The first mention of the Nikolsburg or Mikulov settlement goes back to 1249. In 1575, the Nikolsburg estate was purchased



by the Dietrichstein noble family and remained in their possession for over 300 years. The Dietrichstein family was one of the most prominent families in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Centuries of influence, power, and riches came to its end with World War II. The last person in the family tree ownership lives an ordinary life with her family in Argentina. The family tomb is protected as a cultural monument of the Czech Republic. As a gesture of goodwill, the ashes of family members are now placed with other descendants. Visitors can see two aisles with coffins of the Dietrichstein family.

The end of World War II meant complete disaster for the castle, as German troops withdrawing from the town set fire to it. The castle was used for German storage of European "stolen treasures".

JEWISH HISTORY IN NIKOLSBURG

In 1421, all Jews were expelled from Vienna and the refugees settled in the town. In 1454, more expulsions of Jews from Moravia brought additional settlers. In the 16th century, Nikolsburg became a cultural center of Moravian Jewry. At its peak, there were 12 synagogues. During the German occupation, synagogues were used to store stolen Jewish

property. The Jewish settlement in Nikolsburg ceased to exist during World War II. Over 4000 burial stones survived the hostility and history. Following World War II, the Jewish population was extinct; the town's German population was expelled. During communist era most of the 12 synagogues were torn down. In 1977/78, remaining main synagogue was torn down. In 2011, restoration to its 1938 original look (Polish style) began. It has four cupolas; four columns (bema) are beautifully restored.

A TV documentary of about 4 minutes (with Czech commentary) is worth seeing: <https://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ivysilani/1126666764-toulava-kamera/215562221500042/obsah/429813-mikulov>

INTERESTING PARTS OF CZECH HISTORY

In 1526, an influential and respected Anabaptist theologian of the Reformation, Balthasar Hubmaier, came to Nikolsburg from Switzerland. Shortly thereafter, the Catholic Habsburg King Ferdinand arrested him. He suffered torture on the rack and was tried for heresy and convicted. On March 10, 1528, he was taken to the public square and executed by burning. Three days after his execution, his wife, with a stone tied around her neck, was drowned in the River Danube. His words are challenging us until now: *"I may err -- I am a man,"* he wrote, *"but a heretic I cannot be because I ask constantly for instruction in the word of God."*

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balthasar_Hubmaier

Our day in Mikulov was quite interesting, educational and emotional.

The last stop of the day was about an hour from Mikulov to stay with friends we have known since the time we arrived in Czechoslovakia.

LADIES RETREAT IN SLOVAKIA

Klara was invited to this event many times in the past but this time she caved in. What an experience, what a blessing. This was for her the second ladies retreat since we came to the Czech Republic. The first one was in Dubrovnik, Croatia with *Thrive Ministry* for women missionaries serving in Europe. This one was a kind of ladies' ecumenical gathering in Slovakia. The topic of the retreat was "Pride". Suddenly Klara became one of the "younger generations". Systematically she was finding all the connections going back to the beginnings of our ministry. Slovak people, especially ladies, are emotionally much warmer and expressive in their love, care, and sharing. Their testimonies during the introduction evening touched Klara's heart in a very special way.

Several ladies shared with her that they met her in Budapest during a Billy Graham and Joni Eareckson evangelistic campaign. He was the first Western religious leader invited by communist Hungary since World War II. July 1989 in Budapest was Klara's first encounter with Christians from then Czechoslovakia. They shared with her that some of them after giving her their addresses to mail them our magazine *"The Battle for the Soul"* became afraid. No one knew her at the time and she could easily have been a communist informant.

During November 1989 the Iron curtain and communism in Eastern Europe fell. This year we will celebrate 30 years of freedom.

Klara met a radio lady from Serbia from the Slovak community living there. In the past, we were mailing them our magazine and radio programs for their broadcasting.

Pavel met Milan Hudec, Radio Logos. Milan brought his wife to be with the ladies. We had a wonderful time together.

CZECH LANGUAGE CHALLENGES

September 26 is the Day of European languages. We picked up for you few specials on

<https://news.expats.cz/weekly-czech-news/12-things-you-didnt-know-about-the-czech-language/>

- Czech is the Lego language—move words around like building blocks.

Unlike English, the Czech word order is very flexible. You can basically move words in a sentence as you wish, depending on what you want to stress. An English sentence can sometimes have four or more different Czech versions. Crazy, you say? We call it amazingly flexible.

The flexibility hides in seven case affixes for singular and seven for plural. They also depend on whether the nouns are masculine, feminine, neutral, animate or inanimate. Thus, "*Pavel loves Klara*" can be said two ways: "*Pavel miluje Klaru*" or "*Klaru miluje Pavel*". In the first instance, the emphasis is on Pavel in the second one on Klara. For now, you will understand what we say and how we speak.

- Czechs find the idea of spelling contests pretty weird.

Thanks to Jan Hus, philosopher, priest, and reformer not only of Christianity but of mod-

ern Czech spelling, Czech students do not spend hours in a classroom learning to spell. The language has one of the phonemic orthographies (e.g. spelling and pronunciation systems) of all the European tongues, so much so that it is frequently used as a model by phonologists.

- Adding "-ovat" is a nifty way of turning English verbs into Czech ones.

Czechs are very creative when it comes to using them: simply take an English verb and add the Czech grammatical affix *-ovat* and you've got *googlovat*, *mailovat*.

- Czech is among the most difficult languages in the world to learn.

The US Foreign Service Institute estimates in its article on language difficulty that an educated, native English-speaking adult would require roughly 1,100 classroom hours to reach a professional level of reading and speaking Czech. Meaning it would take you 22 years if you have a one-hour lesson a week.

- Did you know?

Up until rather recent times (like even within the last 50 years), Czech was the third spoken language in Texas. Today many of those who spoke it have passed away but the interest is still high. There are still held dozens of Czech festivals of polka bands.

PRAISES

- Klara's brother from Colorado came to visit for a few days.
- Bethany from Denver Colorado is the "little girl" we saw last time while we lived in Denver (1979-84). She came to

present her paper at Brno University. What a joy to reconnect, see some family pictures and hear about those we "left behind" after moving on. We are looking forward to seeing them in November.

- Our sister churches are doing a great job in conducting teaching conferences. As we get together, we can encourage each other as well as meet new people.

PLEASE PRAY FOR

- Patience. As we travel and interact with local people, it feels like being lost in a sand storm. Once we step out of our Christian aquarium, there are no believers. We have numerous friends in the world and from the world but there is no interest in spiritual life. It is especially hard as some of them depart from this world due to illness, old age or, as recently happened, young men who committed suicide. Those who are left behind mourn and ask "why?" They listen politely, admit that there might be something above us ... and since no one knows for sure, they hold on to their convictions. They are, humanly speaking, good people but their hearts are immunized by atheism and humanism. The Czech president says that he is a "tolerant atheist". We all live in an environment where people are preconditioned by evolution, inoculated by atheism and nourished by globalism.
- The European church is becoming insignificant and God's word is silenced. Focus is on humanitarian help, compassion, understanding and open arms to sinful lifestyles and demands of "minorities" are changing tolerance in the socie-

ty. Compromise with the world has pushed biblical teaching out of church life. Teaching about sin and repentance is out. Depressed and undernourished believers leave churches and seek the counsel of the world, psychologists and psychoanalysts, with the help of antidepressants. If we want to reach the world we have to be ready to meet the enemy. We need courageous men to teach and disciple without compromise.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PRAYERS, SUPPORT AND PARTICIPATION IN OUR LIFE AND THE CZECH & SLOVAK MINISTRIES

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

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