



© Ivan Steiger MMXXI

And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. And you shall repeat them diligently to your sons and speak of them when you sit in your house, when you walk on the road, when you lie down, and when you get up. (Deuteronomy 6:5-7)

**DECEMBER 2021
DEAR FRIENDS AND PARTNERS OF
THE REACH BEYOND
MINISTRY TO THE PEOPLES
OF CZECHIA AND SLOVAKIA**

DEAR GOD'S SERVANTS

Can we truly love God as commanded in Dt 6:5? We can't, but our love for Him should be constantly growing.

Before the end of the year, we want to share with you the events of the last days of this year. As it seems that while



this year has been full of trials, in the end, it has also been a time of great encouragement and new hope.

Covid's time has changed everything, and most conference-like events were canceled.

Despite it, in November we went to Kroměříž for a whole weekend. Pavel preached in a Bible Church. As always, on the occasion of being away from home, we visited relatives and friends nearby.

We were not only delighted, but more importantly encouraged that the post-communist generation has a solid Christian foundation, direction, and purpose. Thanks to the American missionaries who have been working here for several years, God's work is progressing well. In Kroměříž, the Czech Bible Institute is training more ministers and future preachers.

A few days after our return, the Covid crisis was declared again. We were invited by Christian Fellowship to Silesia. This raised the question: "to go or not to go, to participate or to stay at

home?" Plus, the first snowstorm was imminent. Halfway through the drive it was getting dark by 4 pm, which was unpleasant.

The destination in Silesia was about 300 miles away. Trucks dominated the highway, and the darkness and fog forced us to hang on to the rear red lights of the vehicle in front of us. Even small accidents in driving conditions like that would stop traffic for hours. PTL we made it with only a few slowdowns.

This time we were looking forward to attending the International Christian Fellowship Conference and celebration of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the Christian Fellowship in the post-communist days. Underground activities ceased to be illegal and time for working freely began. The topic of the conference was The Resolute Heart. Pavel preached twice next day on Sunday.

We didn't know until the last minute if the conference would be held or if the lockdown would affect this event as well. The Germans and Slovaks could not come due to lock-down. Only those from Poland, Bohemia, and the Silesia Language Triangle came. This region is close to the Polish border and there are many mixed families.

REGION CHURCH HISTORY

The Evangelical Church in Těšínsko, Silesia, has existed in various organiza-

tional forms continuously from the first half of the 16th century until today.

Although at the time of the Bohemian Reformation Těšín was part of the Bohemian state, Hussite ideas were applied here only to a limited extent. On the other hand, the inhabitants of the Principality of Těšín were positive towards Luther's Reformation a hundred years later. The Reformation here was peaceful and conservative.

In 1938, the Czechoslovak part of Těšín was occupied by the Polish army, and all the congregations of the Augsburg Evangelical Church in Eastern Silesia Czechoslovakia found themselves on Polish territory. In December of the same year, they were annexed to the Silesian diocese of the Evangelical-Augsburg Church in Poland. The following year, however, the entire territory of the Silesian diocese was annexed to the German Reich, and the congregations in Těšín were shortly afterward placed under the German Consistory in Wrocław. Most of the pastors were deprived of their ministry, many of them were imprisoned or executed; after a time, services were held only in German.

The period after World War II brought many hopes for a free future, which in many cases turned into bitter disappointments. The date of February 25, 1948, marks the rise of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the beginning of totalitarianism. The socio-

political changes that soon began to manifest themselves in the penetration of totalitarian communist power into all areas of social life, also significantly influenced events in the Silesian Evangelical Church.

The churches came under the direct supervision and control of the state. Although the state provided the clergy with a state salary and provided the churches with a certain amount of economic security from the state treasury, it nevertheless controlled them completely. It made its own decisions and granted or withdrew approval for pastors and lay workers to exercise clerical, pastoral, and preaching ministries. The state exercised supervision and control over the churches through church secretaries at the level of districts and regions. It was the duty of each pastor to keep the appropriate district secretary informed of all developments in the congregation, to seek approval in the event of a visit or substitution by another pastor, to submit for approval programs of worship, the financial budget of the congregation, candidates for election to the presbytery, and to seek approval in the conduct of business. The state gave special attention and control to work among children and youth as well as mission activities. Pastoral and congregational work under these conditions was very demanding.

After the fall of communism in 1989, the Christian Fellowship was restored after 41 years as an independent Christian movement within the Silesian Evangelical Church.

The annual youth conference was a big event and in the early years of our ministry here, we became regular guest speakers. What a joy it was to reunite with those who were part of post-communist youth events. We were all the more pleased that our ministry was not forgotten by those who attended at that time.

We didn't understand fully the sermon in Polish, the preacher spoke too fast. However, we understand 85% of the written Polish text. Therefore, we had no problem singing and understanding words in Polish. A special feature of this region is the "our-way-language. The locals use a mix of predominantly Polish, some Czech, Slovak and even German words. That kind of language we understood without many problems. The German paper was translated into Czech and read. The Slovak contribution was presented online.

During the conference, we appreciated the uniqueness of the region. We are accepted and loved as part of one big family. From thirty years ago we met grandfathers, fathers, sons, and now grandsons and a few great-grandchildren.

To tell the truth, this was for us a marathon weekend. During the conference and the Sunday morning and evening messages in the congregation, we encountered unexpected reunions. One of the brothers came to say thank you for the radio programs they listened to during the military service more than 30 years ago; those were programs produced in Indonesia and Ecuador. In this case, even their commander turned a blind eye and they were not punished for listening to broadcasts from Monte Carlo or Quito. To listen to a foreign broadcast of any kind was then illegal.

To get together with those who were producing and recording programs in this fellowship was touching. Now, what a technology we all have, and opportunities, despite Covid, for pushing these limits and opportunities so much further.

It is wonderful to see this strong region of believers passing on the faith from father to son. We look forward, Lord willing, to next summer's youth event.

We also look forward with anticipation to another year that our Lord has prepared for us. Opportunities are many, disciples are few.

PRAISES AND PRAYERS

- Project Lili is on the way. We gathered many pictures and written tes-

timony and the first pages look very good.

- Our translating projects are moving on; while at the conference we found new people who can help us, especially in editing.
- We wish everyone a joyful and Merry Christmas.

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

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

<pavel.steiger@gmail.com>

<°))))><

You may mail your U.S.

Tax-deductible contributions to:
REACH BEYOND
P.O. BOX 39800
COLORADO SPRINGS, CO 80949-9800
U.S.A.

You may mail your Canadian

Tax-deductible contributions to:
REACH BEYOND
3 - 44 SALTSMAN DRIVE
CAMBRIDGE, ON N3H 4R7
CANADA

Attach to your check the following note:
FOR THE MINISTRY OF
PAVEL & KLARA STEIGER
ACC # 100-110329