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***And He was saying to them,
"The harvest is plentiful, but the
laborers are few; therefore plead
with the Lord of the harvest to send
out laborers into His harvest ..."
(Luke 10:2)***

**FEBRUARY – March 2023
DEAR FRIENDS AND PARTNERS OF
THE REACH BEYOND
MINISTRY TO THE PEOPLES
OF CZECHIA AND SLOVAKIA**

DEAR SERVANTS OF GOD

February is the shortest month of the year. On top of it, both of us came down with a so-called "respiratory infection" – scratchy throat, dry cough, and runny nose. Our action plans turned into days of hibernation.

This explains why we have combined printed and electronic Prayer letters.



The month of February is full of different anniversaries.

The first reminder is that 33 years ago, we were busy with radio work in Quito Ecuador. This came one year after the fall of communism in Czechoslovakia. We arrived in Ecuador after four years in Indonesia. After one year in Ecuador, we came to Arizona to attend the graduation of our older son Filip from ASU. Out of graduation and one casual visit to a mission-minded lady, the Lord "grounded" us in the area for almost a year. At this time, we had already lived out of a suitcase for two years. Arizona became our US mission home base.

From Arizona, almost fully supported, we moved on to Czechoslovakia to advance the mission work in the field. Radio work and publishing were already established there since the time we lived in Indonesia. After the fall of communism, our dream of creating radio programs locally in partnership with locals and already-proven ministers became a reality. It was a time of many volunteer helpers.

The greatest wonder of missionary involvement is how long it can last and how long we are part of it.

We never imagined how many changes in the ministry we would see. The Czech and Slovak short-wave broadcasting from Ecuador after 25 years was the first to be taken off the air. We were neither sad nor disappointed, knowing and believing that it is God who opens the doors of opportunity, and who also closes them. We looked forward to new challenges, and they came.

After shortwave and analog radio broadcasting came the digital age. From electrical typewriters to computers, the era of tape reels to CDs was over; huge recording studios could be installed or moved into small offices or rooms at home, as in our case. Today, almost anyone can operate a recording studio with a computer and basic electronic equipment. Of course, "know-how" and what to broadcast is important. Nowadays, the internet, Zoom, and smartphones can transmit instantly not only a signal but also digital pictures from anywhere to the most remote places on Earth.

We cannot list or mention all the changes – technical, methodological, economic, or political – we could go on and on; instead, we would like to highlight what remains unchanged.

No missionary in the field can last without the prayers and practical support of individuals. We never deleted a name from our mailing list unless we were asked to; people moved or were promoted to heaven. Our list after 30 years is

much shorter; however, each one of you is precious to us.

You know from our letters about challenges, opportunities, and blessings along this journey. We don't see an interest in good news, sad to say, but bad news catches more attention. Churches here are small, and no new buildings are under construction. Most outreach activities are focused on youth programs, conferences, and summer programs, especially English camps. A lot of preparation goes into them, but the harvest is small. We are glad for each newcomer.

On the other hand, Covid time changed the outreach of churches, attendance decreased but the number of those connected to Sunday's internet broadcast and mid-week bible study and prayer time via ZOOM increased. We know that the Lord is the one who keeps track of the number of believers. We must persevere to the end.

The Lord has special ways to show His way of encouragement. From time to time, we asked for prayers on the translation of Pavel's book into the Polish language. We had a Polish pastor who was willing to help from the beginning with editing, publishing, and distribution; however, it became for time being, Dead End Avenue. Instead, we pray for pastors' health problems, denominational pressures from Warsaw, and burnout. This is not the end of the project.

PRAISE

About a month ago, we had visitors from the most western parts of the coun-

try in our Kladno church, about a two-hour drive away. They knew about the church and outreach from the Sunday and Wednesday teaching through Zoom connection. The young man of Polish descent married a Czech girl and has been living here for about 8 years. He is fluent in the Czech language and offered to help with the translation. For days and weeks, we were speechless. The Lord answered and reassured us of our heart's desire to share the basic issues of Protestant orientation with Polish-speaking people, our brothers, and sisters in Christ.

For years, we had the privilege of participating in youth conferences in the northeastern corner of Moravia. There, we had an opportunity to fellowship with trilingual believers. On the Polish side of the border, there is a small pocket of Protestant believers in the sea of Catholic worshippers. The Czech, Polish, and Slovak languages are used there interchangeably. From those meetings came the idea to translate Pavel's book into the Polish language.

OUR SINFUL WORLD

At this point, we will take a break from the Good News report. It is time for a short history lesson.

Philosopher and Harvard professor George Santayana is popularly known for aphorisms, such as "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" (Wikipedia). His more than a hundred years old warning fits our days.

Let us remember, two World wars started in Europe. Many problems have not been resolved then with all kinds of postwar treaties. The end of the war was mainly a territorial division of countries occupied and destroyed by Germany. Central and Eastern Europe, East Germany, Czechoslovakia Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria, became Russian satellites. The West won the war but lost the battle.

February 1948 was the year when the Communists took over Czechoslovakia. No sooner had the country breathed a sigh of relief from the German occupation than Soviet advisers took over.

Twenty years later, in 1968, the attempt to "reform Communism," the so-called "Prague Spring", ended with the Russian invasion. "Socialism with a human face" process of moderate democratization, economic decentralization, freedom of speech and press, and political liberalization led to more of the same, the oppressive communist domination. A form of "special action" to defend the Communist bloc was justified. Several hundred people were killed in action, mostly in motor vehicle accidents caused by the occupying army. Within a year, over 250 thousand people, including us, fled the country, mostly those unwilling to be united "With the Soviet Union for Eternity." That was the main slogan of the communist domination era of how long the brotherhood of the two nations should last. "Temporary" became permanent. This situation lasted twenty years.

This is almost like a time without end for a personal life.

"Nobody's trees grow to the sky" is a Czech saying. Even Hitler was dreaming about the millennial empire and his dream lasted just a dozen years.

After the fall of communism in 1989, in 1990-91 things started slowly moving back to normal. Military garrisons numbered 75,000 Soviet soldiers and around 40,000 officers' family members supervised the brotherhood of the two nations. It took more than 20 thousand railway carriages, and 825 train transports to move out 1,220 tanks, 2,500 combat vehicles, 105 aircraft, 175 helicopters, and 95 thousand tons of ammunition, to be shipped back to Russia.

This February marks one year since another "special operation" or war with all the atrocities war presents, began. Russia has attacked an independent country many times and at different places before. This is the reason why we are uneasy with the "special operation" in Ukraine. Day by day, we have news reports about the destruction and bravery of the country. The Czech Republic granted temporary protection to 400 thousand of refugees from Ukraine, mostly women and children. Each 25th person in the Czech Republic is now Ukrainian, the most of all countries per capita. The number of refugees in Europe has exceeded 7 million people, and an additional 7.5 million people are displaced internally. We all live in dangerous days.

PRAISE AND PRAYERS

- Please pray for the situation in Ukraine.
- After the Covid interruption our regular winter conference was moved to March.
- Several other conferences are scheduled. Most of them are going to be accessible even via ZOOM.
- Our writing and project translating are moving ahead.

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

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