

The Lord's Work in the Czech Republic

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Dear Brethren,

After nearly 16 years in the Czech Republic, I have decided to relocate my family to the United States sometime during the summer or early fall of this year. This has not been an easy decision for us (especially for Ivana, since the Czech Republic has always been her home), but it is a decision that I feel is necessary. I would like to take this opportunity to explain our reasons for making this change after having spent so long involved in the work in this part of the world.

- The work in the Czech Republic has changed considerably since I originally came in 1992. In 1992, fresh after the 1989 revolution which brought religious freedom to this country, many people were interested in the Gospel. Over the years, this interest has continued to wane to the point that there is virtually no genuine interest on the part of non-Christians in actually studying the Bible. I would stress that this is not a new situation, but I have found it to be particularly acute over the last 5 years or so. I have almost no private students, in spite of efforts both from myself and from the church in Litomyšl to generate interest.
- The church in Litomyšl has reached a point where they are capable of continuing in the Lord's Work in their area without my continued presence. Some of the members have been Christians for as long as 16 years, and most of the others have been Christians for at least 10 years (the last two Czechs I baptized were baptized just over 5 years ago, and unfortunately, both have since fallen away from the Lord). These Christians are no longer babes in Christ, and have the knowledge and maturity to now be teaching others the Gospel.
- The continued fall in the value of the U.S. dollar would force us to raise our support considerably if we were to continue to stay here. Given the current level of interest in the Gospel here, we do not feel that that is a sacrifice we can ask congregations to make. We know there are other preachers in other places where the interest is higher who are in need of support, and who have been hurt by the fall of the dollar as well.

Here are our plans as they stand now:

- Relocate to the U.S. during the summer/early fall (after selling our house here, and letting our children finish the school year, which ends at the end of June). We must sell our house before leaving the Czech Republic. We also need to apply for the proper documents for Ivana to live in the U.S. (she is not a U.S. citizen, but only travels there on a tourist visa).

- Continue to administer the webpage of the church in Litomyšl, as well as answering Bible questions from Czechs by e-mail. This does not require our physical presence in the Czech Republic, and requires a minimal amount of time on my part.
- Return to the Czech Republic annually for about 3-4 weeks to encourage the saints in Litomyšl, and be of whatever service I can be to saints in other congregations in the Czech Republic. This is extremely important to us.
- In no way whatsoever do we intend to “abandon” the work in the Czech Republic.

We would like to make the following requests of you all:

- Remember us in your prayers during this time of relocation, which will not be easy on anyone in the family, but especially not on Ivana and the children.
- If you know of any congregations that might be interested in speaking with us concerning our coming to work with them, please help us to be in contact with them. This would be particularly helpful, since we are not known personally by many people outside of the congregations involved in our support. You all have many more contacts than we do among other congregations.
- Consider helping us with our relocation costs, which we estimate at this time to be about \$10,000 (including airfare for a family of 5).

Brethren, I understand that this letter is a bit “out of the blue” and may be quite a surprise to you. Please believe me when I say that we have not approached this decision lightly or without much thought and prayer. I came to the Czech Republic alone in 1992 with two suitcases. That was fairly easy to do. When I leave, it will be with a wife and three children who are looking to me to lead them in the right direction. This has weighed on my mind, and I am mindful of the seriousness of such a move. Please continue to keep us in your prayers, and also please continue to pray for the saints in Litomyšl, who must also make adjustments after we leave.

If we can answer any questions concerning this letter, please feel free to drop us an e-mail at baxleyovi@cirkevbozi.cz. We will keep you informed as to how things on our end are progressing.

Yours in Christ,

Steven and Ivana Baxley