

Glorious Hope Slavná naděje

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In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:1

Na počátku bylo Slovo a to Slovo bylo u Boha a to Slovo bylo Bůh. John 1;1

Na počiatku bolo Slovo, to Slovo bolo u Boha a to Slovo bolo Boh. John 1;1

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Convention Mission Statement

The Czechoslovak Baptist Convention of USA and Canada exists 1) to assist in extending the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in lands of central and eastern Europe, particularly the Czech and Slovak Republics; 2) to support the work of Baptists and other evangelical churches in North America that minister to persons of Czech and Slovak descent, and 3) to provide a Christian context for worship, fellowship, teaching, and appreciation of heritage among those in the United States and Canada who bear interest in the nationalities we represent.

Misijní posláání konvence

Československá baptistická konvence Spojených států a Kanady byla ustanovena za účelem: 1) napomáhat v šíření evangelia našeho Pána Ježíše Krista v zemích střední a východní Evropy, zvláště v České a Slovenské republice; 2) podporovat práci baptistů a jiných evangelikálních církví v severní Americe, které slouží českým a slovenským potomkům; 3) předkládat formu bohoslužby, obecnství a učení, vážít si dědictví těch, ve Spojených státech a v Kanadě, kterým leží na srdci národy, které reprezentujeme.

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Editorial

His Birth

"...that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:35)

The arrival of the Messiah had been expected by the nation of Israel for centuries. But the idea of the arrival of a new king, and ruler of Israel, was not fulfilled. Instead of the magnificent arrival of a king and supreme ruler, a child was born. This child – called the Son of God – came into the world under undignified conditions. What mother would want to give birth to her baby in a stable?

The child, however, was born, and men of power were terrified. Their rulership was under threat! They could not have known that this child would have the key to every heart. Although they tried to get rid of him and prevent any influence he could possibly have on their society, the child's birth is now celebrated worldwide, in the 21st century.

It is because Jesus was born into this world from otherworldly origins that his birth continues to be

celebrated. His birth, his influence on humankind, as well as his departure from this earth are beyond human understanding. He came not as the ruler and king of Israel, but as ruler and king of the human heart. It sounds very abstract. However, the events recorded in the Gospels reveal the mystery and intent of the birth of Jesus Christ.

Another mystery is veiled in His words: *"You must be born again."* (John 3: 7) Doing something again usually results in change, and usually that change is for the better. This is what man's rebirth means: to fundamentally change one's behaviour and way of thinking. It is not a command, but a statement of reality based on the authority of God Himself. And this change can be caused by the Son of God, who was born long ago.

Editor-in-Chief *Natasha Laurinc*
Translated by *Elizabeth Jane Fields*

□

Jeho narození

„To svaté dítě, které se narodí, bude nazýváno Syn Boží.“ (Lukáš 1; 35)

Příchod Mesiáše byl v izraelském národě očekáván po staletí. Představa o příchodu nového krále, vládce nad Izraelem, se však nenaplnila. Místo velkolepého příchodu krále a svrchovaného vládce se narodilo dítě, které bylo nazváno Synem Božím. Navíc to dítě přišlo na svět za docela nedůstojných podmínek. Která matka by chtěla své dítě porodit ve stáji?

Dítě se však narodilo a tehdejší mocnáři se děsili. Jejich vládcovství bylo ohroženo! Netušili, že toto dítě bude mít klíč ke každému srdci. Ačkoliv se snažili tohoto dítěte zbavit a zabránit jakémukoliv jeho vlivu na tehdejší společnost, je příchod tohoto dítěte oslavován po celém světě i ve 21. století.

Je to proto, že Ježíš má jiný původ a do tohoto světa se narodil. Jeho narození se vymyká lidskému chápání stejně tak jako jeho vliv na člověka a potom odchod z tohoto světa. Nepřišel jako vládce a král Izraele, ale jako vládce a král lidského srdce. Zní to velice abstraktně. Události zaznamenané v evangeliích však odhalují tajemství i záměr narození Ježíše Krista.

Další tajemství je ukryto v Jeho slovech: *„Musíte se znovu narodit.“* (Jan 3;7) Udělat něco znovu obvykle signalizuje změnu, změnu k lepšímu. A o tom to nové narození člověka je. Znamená to od základu změnit způsob myšlení a chování. Není to příkaz, ale konstatování skutečnosti založené na autoritě samého Boha. A tuto změnu může způsobit právě Syn Boží, který se tenkrát narodil.

Nataša Laurincová, šéfredaktorka

□

From the Executive Secretary

photo: Marina Kulich

Christmas

What are you thankful for?" was a question presented at the Children's Time to a group of children at our church, this past Thanksgiving Sunday. Most answers from little youngsters were expected... "My mommy and daddy." "I'm thankful for Grandma and Grandpa," was another. One answer, however, made the entire church erupt in laughter: "I'm thankful that Christmas is so close." Perhaps an expected answer around Thanksgiving in the USA. How-

ever, Thanksgiving Sunday in Canada is in early October. Let's be honest: not too many of us are thinking of Christmas in early October, but this little girl was. I'm sure gifts and candy were at least a partial reason for her excitement, but nevertheless, it made me ask myself: am I this excited about Christmas? What was your thought the first time you realized that Christmas was just around the corner? Did this thought cheer you up and bring a smile to your face, or was the

reaction: Oh, no, Christmas is so busy and stressful? Often, we allow the business of life to take away all the joy and wonder of Christmas. I hope you will find time to slow down, pause, meditate and reflect this Christmas. Because it is not about gifts, it's not about the family. It's about HIM and that's why we call it **CHRISTmas**.

"For today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:11)

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The General Board of our convention met on November 2, 2019, at Grace Baptist Church, in Windsor, Ontario, and has approved the dates of our annual gathering:

111th Czechoslovak Baptist Convention
July 9–12, 2020
Malone University, Canton, Ohio

The theme chosen by the board is:

"...LIFT UP YOUR HEADS, BECAUSE YOUR REDEMPTION IS DRAWING NEAR." (Luke 21:28)

• **Interpreting the Signs of the Times** (Matthew 16:1–3)

"Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a

testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." (Matthew 24:12–14)

• **Creation: Waiting for the Sons of God to be Revealed** (Rom. 8:19–22)

"Creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed." (Rom. 8:19)

"You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands." (Isaiah 55:12)

• **Aliens and Strangers Longing for a Better Country—a Heavenly One** (Heb. 11:13–16)

"I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning." (Ps. 130:5–6)

Missions Trip to Podgorica



The planning for the upcoming missions trip to Podgorica, Montenegro, is underway. Andrea Lamos-Turner is leading a team to go and serve at a VBS English camp in July 2020. The camp will be for a week. They will be working with children ages 6–12 in the mornings (VBS) and with teens and young adults, as well as parents, in the afternoons. Vladimir Cizmanski, a past delegate of the convention, has been a full-time missionary in Podgorica with his wife Marijana since the mid 90s. The church began growing and now they are building the first evangelical church in the country. Andrea is excited and is looking for more people interested in serving on the team for the summer missions trip. If you are interested in serving or in supporting this mission financially please contact her at andrea7turner@gmail.com



“The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here...” (Rom 13:11b–12)

• The Second Coming (Acts 1:9–11)

“This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:11b)

“Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him...” (Rev. 1:7)

“Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude... shouting: ‘Hallelujah! ... Let us Rejoice and be glad... For the wedding of the Lamb has come...’ (Rev. 19:6–7)

We are very privileged to have had visits from the presi-

dents of both the Czech and Slovak Baptist unions in the last several years. In the summer of 2020, we are looking forward to the visits of Rev. Pavel Coufal, the president of the Czech Baptist Union and the secretary, Jan Jackanič.

Visit our website www.czskbc.org for the updates and tentative program of the next convention. Subscribe to our quarterly Newsletter and receive the updates and PDF versions of *Glorious Hope* before the printed copy is mailed.

Mark your calendars and save the date of the 111th Czechoslovak Baptist Convention: July 9–12, 2020, Malone University, Canton, Ohio.

In His Service,

Darko Siracki
Executive Secretary
Czechoslovak Baptist Convention
www.czskbc.org

LET'S GO TO BETHLEHEM AND SEE Luke 2:8–15

Stan Mantle

"I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people." Luke 2:10b

It is a wonderful thing that it was to shepherds living out in the fields that the birth announcement of God's Son was delivered. Of all the addresses to which word might have been sent; addresses in fancy neighbourhoods with impressive houses and servants, where "important" people lived – it was to a certain hillside outside Bethlehem where shepherds were spending the night out of doors looking after their sheep that God sent His spectacular angelic telegram.

Why we may ask? Why with so many of smooth hands and rich gowns did He choose a rough band of weather-worn watchers of sheep, those of lined faces and calloused hands?

Huddled about their fire for warmth the shadow and damp of the night just barely held back from swallowing them, they would have been the subject of derisive laughter and mockery if they were thought of at all by the higher classes, the people of power and prestige. Yet in the annals of eternity as the guest list was prepared for the nativity of His Son, God chose these shepherds as the ones who should be

informed and advised as to where the Child could be found.

We should not idealize the shepherds fancying them as pure and unspoiled men living apart from the corruption of general human society. Shepherds at that time were not generally well regarded exhibiting the tendency as one writer has expressed it *to confuse other people's property with their own* (pg. 80 Ellis New Century Bible Commentary on Luke).

Yet God chose them and dispatched the angelic host to appear before them. Perhaps He did because for all their failings, for all their share in the sin disease of our race He recognized that these shepherds were just humble and foolish enough — to believe enough — to decide:

"Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." Luke 2:15b

It is significant that the shepherds, when God revealed to them the unfolding of His plan in the Present, in the Now — were not too busy with their sheep or too attached to their fire, or too accustomed to moaning about the

long delay of the Messiah's coming, or too wise in their philosophical understanding to get up from where they sat, stretch their legs and go and see for themselves. Some of more deeply religious and "pious" hearts than the shepherds, can have the glory of God shining about them — the work of God literally rising around them, but being fixed in their place and devoted to their injuries see it not.

In contrast *"Let's go to Bethlehem and see"* is the sentiment of believers on the verge of discovery, the decision of invited guests on the way to finding and filling their honoured place.

What a tremendous thing it was that God was doing, that amazingly they were invited to participate in. What wonderful discoveries were theirs to behold as they were willing to undertake the journey to Bethlehem.

What was it that Bethlehem offered a glimpse of?

The angel had told them. *"I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people."* Luke 2:10b

First, the shepherds went to Bethlehem to see **good news of great joy.**



"Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." Luke 2:15b

People are interested in news. What is new compels our interest, draws our attention. There is an appetite for novelty and change — for variety to offset and provide interest to the unvarying landscape. Much the news each day brings cannot be described as good. There are stories of murder and fraud, of conflict and disaster, of strife and dispute, accusation, outburst and war. In comparison to these Good News, really Good News is relatively rare. We hear of tax cuts but seldom ever see them. We would like to see progress and improvement but strangely with all the rights and special interests being championed, for all the improvements and advances of society in pushing back boundaries and removing barriers the result for many is not more freedom, but bondage, not wider vistas of opportunity but confinement in smaller and narrower cells. Freedom from rules and expectations is not as free, not as wonderful in the grasping and attaining as in the visioning and pressing for. What then would real **GOOD NEWS** of great joy look like?

Joy is something different for dif-

ferent people, yet there is the common element of something lost being found, some treasure being obtained, some threat being withstood and prevailed over. In Augustine's *Confessions* written nearly 1600 years ago he reflects:

What then takes place in the soul, when it is more delighted at finding or recovering the things it loves, than if it had ever [always] had them?...

The conquering commander triumphant; yet he had not conquered unless he had fought; and the more peril there was in the battle, so much the more joy there is there in the triumph.

The storm tosses the sailors, threatens shipwreck; all wax pale at approaching death; sky and sea are calmed, and they are exceedingly joyed...

A friend is sick and his pulse threatens danger; all who long for his recovery are sick in mind with him. He is restored, though as yet he walks with not his former strength; yet there is such joy, as was not when before he walked sound and strong.

An example of this happened some years ago close to Christmas when I

lost my camera. I thought I had probably just misplaced it but as the days passed and it was not found anywhere I looked, I began to think it must have been stolen. I felt bad with Christmas coming and wanting to take pictures. Even more than that, I felt terrible because in the camera was a full roll of shots of the progress of the church construction which couldn't be replaced. I prayed to the Lord along the line that if I couldn't have the camera back could I just have the film back? Shortly afterwards I found the camera in my gym bag. I felt like jumping up and down for joy and exclaimed loudly

"Praise God! Praise the Lord!"

I was more joyful about finding the camera than I had ever been about getting it in the first place.

Now hear again the angel's pronouncement to the shepherds:

"I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people."

What is this news which involves something we all have lost being found, a great treasure uncovered, a long lonely exile ended? This news is richer than a good year on the stock market, deeper

 Continues on page 11

Vianočný cenzus

Jan Franka

Lk 2:1 – 5

Prvá osoba, ktorá sa spomína v Lukášovej verzii vianočného príbehu, nie je ani Mária, ani Jozef, ani anjeli, ale rímsky imperátor Augustus. Boh použil tohto človeka, aby vyhlásil celosvetové (rozumnej rímske) sčítanie ľudí a aby sa Jozef a Mária museli vydať na cestu zo severu krajiny na juh. Vzdušnou čiarou to bola vzdialenosť asi 120 km. Betlehem sa nachádza 10 km juhozápadne od Jeruzalema. Keby nebolo sčítanie ľudí, Ježiš by sa bol narodil v Nazarete, v Jozefovom a Máriinom dome, a tým činom by sa nevyplnilo proroctvo z Micheáša 5:1: „*Ale ty, Betlehem Efrata, hoci si najmenší medzi júdskymi čeladami, z teba mi vyjde ten, ktorý bude vládcom v Izraeli. Jeho pôvod je v praveku, v časoch večnosti.*“ Hoci Jozef a Mária boli z judského pokolenia, Dávidova dynastia by nebola pokračovala znovu z Betlehema. Celé proroctvo sa však muselo splniť.

Lukáš, možno viac ako ostatní evanjelisti, chce biblické udalosti zaradiť do svetových dejín. Keďže Ježiš prišiel spasiť všetkých, Lukáš sa chcel dotknúť samého centra ríše.

Rimania pri podobných sčítaniach ľudí nikdy nepožadovali od obyvateľstva, aby sa počas sčítania vrátilo do svojich pôvodných domovov. Možno tento rozkaz platil iba pre Židov, alebo bol dopracovaný niektorým lokálnym „vládcom“, v tomto prípade to bol Kyrenius Sýrsky. Tým, že sa každý musel dostaviť do svojho rodiska, Rimania podporili židovské cítenie a dosiahli cieľ. Lukáš vysvetlil túto udalosť v príbehu Jozefa a Márie.

Svetové dejiny o tomto sčítaní neuvádzajú takmer nič, preto mnohí spochybňujú pravdivosť tejto udalosti. V dejinách sa píše, že Augustus bol veľký administratívny reformista v Ríme, a toto sčítanie ľudí je asi súčasťou jeho reforiem. On vôbec netušil, že Boh použije jeho administratívne reformy na vyplnenie proroctiev. Ani jeden z evanjelistov si to nevšimol, no Lukáš, všeobecne vzdelaný človek, kresťan gréckeho pôvodu, rímsky občan, videl aj tento dejinný fakt ako Božie riadenie. Lukáš sa na Boha pozerá ako na Pána ľudstva a Pána dejín ľudstva. „Pánove“ (Kiriosove) rozkazy v Ríme sú vlastne iba realizáciou Božích plánov. Rímsky cisár sa takto stal účastníkom v dejinách spásy ľudstva.

Podobné sčítanie ľudí bolo v Egypte v roku 119 AD. Z toho sčítania sa zachoval kus papyrusu. Toto je znenie jedného typického sčítania ľudí v Rímskej ríši:

„Ptolemaiusovi, mestskému tajomníkovi:

Od Horosa, syn Horosov, jeho matka bola Herieus a pochádzala z mesta Bacchias...

Zapisujem seba aj tých, čo bývajú so mnou v dome.

Ja som Horos, poľnohospodár, mám tolko a tolko zeme, mám 48 rokov a nad pravým okom mám jazvu. Zapisujem aj svoju ženu Tapekysis, Horosovu dcéru, starú 45 rokov, a naše vlastné dieťa Horosa, syna... rokov starého, bez identifikačných znakov na sebe. Horion, ďalší syn, rok starý, bez identifikačných znakov na tele...”

Niečo podobné zapísal aj Jozef na mestskom úrade: „*Jozef, ben Jakob, (Jakobov syn), tesár, Mária, bath loachim (loachimova dcéra), jeho manželka, Yeshua, prvorodený syn.*“

□





What God Has Been Teaching Me

Ruby Mikulencak

Martin Luther – *“Blowing out the candles of other people does not make yours shine brighter. Be careful not to measure your holiness by other people.”*

Moody – *“Now if a man has no love of God in his heart, how easy it is to become offended, easy to take offense. If we have love, we might not be all the time finding fault with other people or criticizing what they have done. What we want is to get this spirit of criticism and fault-finding out of the Church and out of our hearts; and let each one of us live as if we had to answer for ourselves and not for others in this community we call Church.”*

I think you get the gist of what I would like you, dear reader, to consider. Often we find it so easy to think we know what is best or better for another person or our fellow believer in Christ. So how can we deal with this critical approach we often have towards others in our circle of friends, our family members or even those who attend our church?

What if, instead of being upset with our fellow believers about how they should believe and act, we would pray to bless them? What does that mean, to bless a person? Most of my life I have prayed that God would bless people.

I am sure you have done the same thing, and maybe, like me, you thought it had a superficial ring to it, because you thought that by blessing a person you were allowing them to have a good and successful day or week.

I have been reading a book, *Grace Outpouring*, by Roy Godwin and Dave Roberts. Roy writes. “When we bless people we are invoking the very character of God himself in the lives of those we pray for.” We are opening the door for them to glimpse something of the kingdom of God. We are actually opening the door for them to experience God more in their lives!”

It also removes the constraints in a person’s life that make it difficult for one to experience God more. Is this not what we all desire for the people in our lives, a deeper understanding and outpouring of God’s grace into their lives?

This is based on Numbers 6:22–26, a very common declaration of our pastors. If you go on to read verse 27 of Numbers 6, it enlightens us more about what an invoking of a blessing is: “So they (the priests) shall put **my name** upon the people and I will bless them”. Godwin writes that “the priests spoke the empowered words that caused God to unleash transformational life, providing blessing upon the people because it was done in the name of Jesus.

So who could you invoke or entreat/plead the name of Jesus on so that this friend, relative or maybe enemy might experience God’s character in their life in a deeper way, that all constraints in their life would be removed so that God could unleash his transformational life on them?

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Baptist Union Celebrated 100 Years Together

(press release) 31/10/2019

From October 25 to 27, 2019, a conference of the Baptists in the Czech Republic and the Baptists in Slovakia under the name "100 YEARS TOGETHER" was held in Litoměřice.

Czech and Slovak Baptists commemorated the beginnings of the Baptist mission and the formation of the first congregations since the second half of the 19th century, which, after the establishment of Czechoslovakia, joined in 1919 into the then Brethren Union Chelčického.

Over the past 100 years, the Czech and Slovak Baptist churches have experienced several periods of joyful development of common life and service, as well as a difficult, very disruptive period of Nazi and especially later, in the 1950s, Communist dictatorship. Since 1994, the Baptist Unity of the Czech Republic has been divided into Czech and Slovak, and both unions are following their own path. However, good mutual relations and cooperation continue, for example in the publication of the common magazine *Rozsjevač/Rozsjevač*, as well as at joint conferences of ladies and youth, and cooperation in the field of marriage and families.

The conference "100 Years Together" was attended by 700 people. Following the motto of the conference "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever", not only were grateful memories present, but also many challenges for our present and future. It has been repeatedly emphasized that Baptists have always formed a missionary community and should therefore further develop their missionary mission in the context of today's world.

In addition to the main programs, there were a number of workshops. The children's band Beetles sang for children, and there was singing by music groups from several choirs as well as the choir JAS, in which several generations of Czechs and Slovaks had participated over more than 50 years. During Sunday worship, conference participants heard a lively and current sermon from the president of the European Baptist Federation, Meego Rimmel, from Estonia.

The conference was in the spirit of joyful gratitude to the Lord God and was a great encouragement for the further growth of mutual communion and service to the people of both our countries.

You can find a link to the photos and a record of the main meetings at www.stoletspolu.cz.

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Let's Go To Bethlehem and See... Continues from page 7

than the pleasure of a new car, more exciting than the home team winning the playoffs and taking home the trophy, for it addresses the hurt and pain, guilt and shame, lostness and alienation of all of humanity. This is news of great joy sent from the One who knows as none other the forgotten and hidden route in our spirits to springs of joy and fountains of delight. Many in these days have been thinking and pondering — probing their minds and firing up their imaginations in search of a gift which will be just right, and a source of enjoyment for this or that individual on their list. Sometimes we get it right and sometimes we miss. But God knows exactly what makes for human joy and fulfilment and it was news of **His** arrival that was sent by an angel to shepherds so long ago.

And so it was a little bundle of joy, the greatest and most potent there ever was that the shepherds were aroused to undertake an unexpected night-time journey to see.

"Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you..." Luke 2:11 the angel had said.

This Word was full of Promise, full of Hope. *"Today in the town of David..."* How far their fortunes as a people had fallen since the glad days when David reigned as King. He had been a shepherd like them, but he rose from caring for his father's sheep on these same hillsides to lead the nation of Israel to victory over her enemies. What a strong and mighty warrior He had been, bold in faith and courageous in battle. How they needed a leader like him again, who would defy and challenge the enemies of Israel in the Name of the Lord.

There were prophecies which gave reason to hope and expect that such a leader would come some day. The dark prophecy of Amos which foretold the judgment for her sins which had come upon Israel, had held out a ray of hope in its ending.

"In that day I will restore David's



fallen tent. I will repair its broken places, restore its ruins, and build it as it used to be..." Amos 9:11

Isaiah too spoke of a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots that would bear fruit and Micah had mentioned Bethlehem the town of David.

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times'... He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. And he will be their peace." Micah 5:2,4-5

Is it any wonder then that the shepherds' hearts were ignited on being addressed out of the night sky by an angel declaring:

"Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you..."

Is it any wonder when this was backed up by a great company of the heavenly host who suddenly appeared with the angel praising God and saying:

"Glory to God in the highest, and on

earth peace to men on whom his favor rests"

that the shepherds' faith burst into flame as they said to one another:

"Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

But we are not so different from the shepherds. The human condition ties us together across the divide of intervening centuries as people in need of a Saviour. More than ever the world needs saving, Countries and cultures need saving. Families and individuals need saving. What is it that you need a Saviour for today? What in your heart cries out for rescue? Help and saving won't be found by refusing to abandon the little fires we have built against the night. The answer for you and me and all our sorry but strangely beloved race is in getting up and making for Bethlehem.

The wonderful gift of a Saviour invites our attendance before the newborn Child. There we may see what God has done. There in silent awe we may wonder at the humble form of the salvation which God has sent into the world. Let's go to Bethlehem and see.

Amen.



Friday Service

Rev. Steve Maddox

Sheep Chaser (Luke 15:3–7, John 10:10–11)

"Suppose one of you had a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not...go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep'." (Luke 15:3–6)

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd..." (John 10:10–11)

It is an honor to be back. I enjoyed speaking to the Convention last summer when the Convention was still at Allegheny College, and it's an honor to be invited back and have the opportunity to fellowship with you and to share God's word with you again. We're from Meadville, so it was about a two-and-a-half-hour trip for us over here to Canton today, and in many ways it was like a homecoming for us, because we have a number of connections, not only with the Convention but also with this university. My wife Susannah got her nursing degree here, from Malone University. She spent four years studying and preparing to be a maternity nurse, so she received her Bachelor of Nursing degree from here. And though I got my undergraduate degree from another Christian institution—from Geneva College, in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania—I got my master's degree

from here at Malone. When we came back from the Czech Republic in 2008, this institution was one of the only places of higher education that offered a master's degree in sports ministry. And since I was a soccer player and a soccer coach, it was a natural fit for me to come here and to receive my master's. And it was good timing as well, because when I finished my two-year course of study, they closed that program down, so I was in the last graduating class in that Master of Sports Ministry. And then also here on campuses when Suzy and I had our third date, the way that we met and the way that we got married I think would make a great movie someday. I think it's very romantic and it's better than some of the stuff that gets put out in the movie theaters. We met in December of 1996 and I was smitten, so I invited her out on a Saturday night. I called her up on Sunday

morning and said: "I'm going to make some hovězí (beef) goulash and some knedlíky (dumplings). Would you like to come down and try some Czech food?" So she came down and had lunch with me on Sunday. And about a week after that, I had to go and speak at Beaver Falls. And Beaver Falls is still quite a ways away from here, but I had a college soccer teammate living here, so I called up my friend Jeff and said: "Hey, I'm interested in this girl that's a student at Malone. Can I come and spend the night and sleep on your floor so I can see this girl?" So he graciously allowed me to come and do that, and so we had our third date here in January of 1997. I went back to the mission field, and she came to see me in May of that year after she had graduated. It was cold and rainy and gray in the Czech Republic until she arrived. Then the sun came out, the cherry trees and apple trees were all in

blossom, and the flowers came out. It was warm, in the 70s and 80s, and we were able to take long walks through the parks. By the end of her two weeks there, we were in love. My boss at that time – and he’s one of the co-leaders on this trip that we’re leading on Monday—his name is Bill. After Susannah went back, after she returned to the States, he said, “You’re no use here. When you finish up your summer activities, take a six-month furlough, go home, and figure out if Susie’s the girl for you to marry”. I finished up my summer work, my summer camps, and flew home end of August. I proposed in October, and we got married in December. So it was like a year and ten days from the time we first saw each other until the time we got married. That was 22 years ago. And so we have a lot of connections, a lot of good memories at Malone. But not only that, we built connections with you: we have some good memories of the times we spent on the picnics at Allegheny College there below the football field, and we were sad that you had to move away from Allegheny. It had been nice to have you right there in our hometown and to be able to come up and visit with you. But we’re glad that you have a new place to hold your convention, here in the beautiful, godly Christ Center campus here at Malone.

So thank you for the warm welcome and thank you for the invitation to come and speak again.

This is a wonderful atmosphere: calm and peaceful, in comfortable surroundings here in this little chapel on the edge of campus. So I don’t think that anybody in here would feel in any way in danger or in peril. I mean, it’s comfortable; it’s nice outside so we’re comfortable. We don’t feel any sense of danger but I’m going to talk about rescues tonight and a rescuer and when somebody needs to be rescued, there’s danger involved. There’s peril, and those kinds of stories move me. I recently watched a movie called *The Finest Hours*. It’s based on a true story that

happened in 1952, on February 18th, 1952, off the coast of New England, off Massachusetts. There was a horrible storm, a once-in-a-hundred-year storm. A northeaster blew in on that coast, near the Coast Guard station in Chatham, Massachusetts. One oil tanker split open and so the commander of the Coast Guard base sent his best sailors out to rescue people from that ripped-open oil tanker. But then word came in that a second tanker had split open, the SS *Pendleton*. That second boat had an inexperienced captain, and he told that guy to get a crew together and go out to that boat and see if he could rescue those people from the *Pendleton*. And there were about 30 sailors on the *Pendleton*. The hero of the story, Bernie Weber, had just recently become engaged. His fiancé was distraught that he had to go out on the ocean in such terrible weather. The locals knew the waters around there and Bernie wasn’t from that town so he didn’t know where all the shoals and banks were. And most of the rest of the sailors were already out on the first rescue mission. So Bernie had two or three other guys that he gathered up to go out on this little tiny boat. And when they were going out on the boat, one of them said, “I sure hope this boat is going to take us to a bigger boat,” because it was so tiny. And the locals were saying, “It’s a suicide mission, don’t send them out, don’t send them out.” His fiancé was distraught that he had to go out in such weather. But Bernie said, “The Coast Guard says you have to go out. They don’t say you have to come back.” So they got in the boat, this little tiny boat and they took off and he had to time things just right to get through the waves and through the shoals and they got out past, they got out into the open ocean and the engine died. The engine died not once but twice. Each time they had to restart it during that storm. Then a big wave came along and took off their compass and took off the roof of this rescue boat. But Bernie pressed on, he got to

the *Pendleton*, and they were able to save thirty-two out of the thirty-three sailors. But once they got them on board, and it was this really tiny boat, they got all these people on board and it started to go down low into the water and they wondered how they were going to make it back. They’d only done part of the journey; now they had to get back, back to base with no compass and no roof. And on the shore, the power had gone out, so they couldn’t even see the lights on the shore anymore. But the people in the village got into their cars and drove them up to the beach and turned their lights on so that the sailors in the tiny boat would be able to see their way back. And they did make it back.

Now, Eric [Sherada] likes to go boating. But I don’t like open water even on a good, calm sunny day, so I can’t imagine the courage it would take to go out into a northeaster and a storm so big to rescue people on such a tiny boat. Now Jesus when He was teaching, He sometimes taught through parables, through stories, and Pastor Mantle has already read that. So Jesus told a rescue story but not only did He tell a rescue story, He lived one out. I want to look more closely at those two things: I’m going to look at the story that He told about rescuing a lost lamb, and then I want to look at His life.

I know Pastor Mantle already read the scripture, but I want to read it again to you. Luke 15: 1–7, NIV: *Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.” Then Jesus told them this parable: “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need*

to repent.” May God bless the reading of His Word.

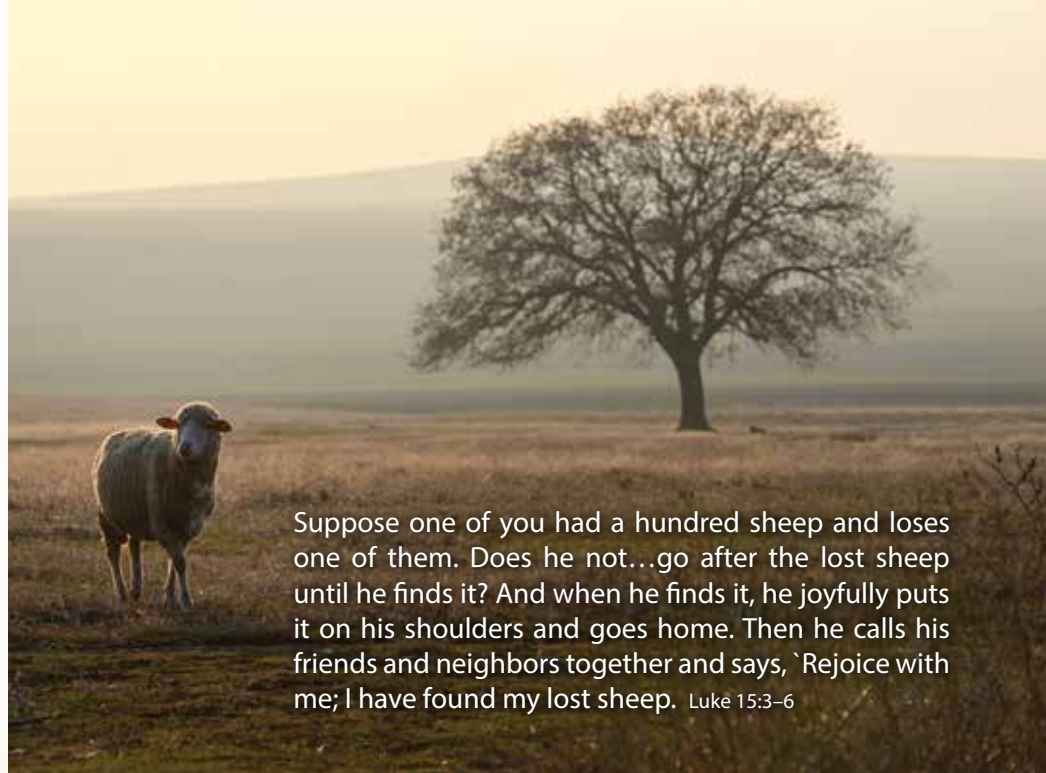
Verses 1&2 give us the context of the story that Jesus tells about the lost sheep. But not just the story about the lost sheep but the next two stories that He tells us as well: the story of the lost coin and of the lost son. Actually the context goes back a little bit further because if you look in Chapter 14, Jesus has just been teaching about the cost of being a disciple and then as Chapter 14 closes, He says, “If anyone has ears to bear, let him hear.” And then we go in to Chapter 15 and it’s the tax collectors and sinners who are coming, who are gathering around to hear Jesus. And this was a regular occurrence, a pattern; this was something that happened over and over and over again. It was the tax collectors and sinners who were coming to Jesus to hear what He had to say. It was these types of people that the Pharisees and the religious people called the people of the land. And that was a derogatory term, but it was the people of the land that were coming to hear what Jesus had to say. And they were looked down on – it could have been because of the jobs that they had, or because they didn’t keep all the petty little details about the ceremonial law, or because they were living immoral lives, but they were certainly looked down on by the scribes and the Pharisees. And there’s quite a contrast here between the tax collectors and sinners who are coming to hear, and the religious people, the Pharisees and the scribes. While one group was coming to hear, the other group was muttering and complaining, saying with contempt, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.” And that was not meant as a compliment by any stretch of the imagination. It was meant to cast shadows, to disparage Jesus and His interactions with those sorts of people. Because if they could, the Pharisees and other religious people avoided all contact with people they called sinners. In fact their attitude was this: there would be joy in heaven over one sinner who was obliterated

before God. So they weren’t looking for them to come back; they were looking forward to the day when they would be destroyed. So in response to this grumbling and complaining and these snide remarks, Jesus tells a series of three stories: the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son. He begins with *What if*. My oldest boy, Stephen junior, when he was two or three, I would take him to the park and I would want him to play on the playground equipment, but he would follow me around and ask me *what if* questions. And that’s how Jesus began this story: *What if*. What if one of you had one hundred sheep but one came up missing. Wouldn’t you, wouldn’t he leave the ninety-nine and go looking out into the darkness, out into the wilderness, the wild, under the threat of bandits and beasts, wild beasts, bears and lions, for the one that has wondered off? Wouldn’t he search high and low until he found that one? Nothing would deter that shepherd, that one who was going out searching, the one who was going out chasing after that lost sheep, not darkness, not the terrain, not beasts, not tiredness, not fatigue, not the thought that he still had ninety-nine safe at home. Nothing would stop the one who was going out searching. And when he found that lost sheep he would gather it up in his arms with gladness, put it on his shoulders and head for home.

I grew up on a farm. We had two or three sheep; we kept them penned up because we didn’t want them wondering off. But we had Black Angus cattle and they were like the son, in the story of the lost son. They looked for ways to get out. And they always got out at the worst times. Sunday morning we’d be all dressed and in the van, ready to go to church, and we’d see that the cows were out. Or at midnight we would get a knock on the door: “You don’t happen to have some black cows, do you? Because they are on the road or over in the neighbor’s cornfield.” They always got out at the wrong time. And our attitude when we had to get up and chase

them was not like the man in Jesus’ story. There was a lot of grumbling, bad attitudes and words that shouldn’t be said here or anywhere else and even if we didn’t say them we were thinking them as we went out and looked for those cattle. And when we found them, we were not gentle with them. We were harsh as we drove them back to the fields. But not so here in the story that Jesus tells. The rescuer takes the lamb and carries it home with gladness. No scolding, no thrashings, no threatening, no grumbling underneath his breath. No, there is joy in his heart. When he gets home, he calls his friends and his neighbors together for a celebration over the safe return of one lost sheep. “It’s party time,” he says to his friends and neighbors. “Come and celebrate with me, I have found him; he is safely back where he needs to be.” Now in verse 7, Jesus steps out of the parable, He steps out of the story. He makes a direct statement. He says there will be a bigger party in heaven and that phrase *in heaven* is an indirect way, a polite way, of saying “with God”. In heaven with God there will be a bigger party over one sinner who repents, who is found, than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent. And I think that Jesus is using some irony there when He says righteous people who don’t need to repent, because we know, based on the rest of Scripture, that we all need to repent. We all need to be saved. We all need to be made right with God. So another way of saying “do not need to repent” would be: For those who think that they are righteous and think that they have no need to repent. So there’s greater joy before God over one of these sinners that you look down on than over the ninety-nine who follow all the rules and make sure that they wash their hands and don’t do work on the Sabbath. There’s more joy with God over that one sinner who was brought back home than over the ninety-nine who think that they have everything. Now this story, along with the two that follow, I think makes some clear points,

and we could base sermons around each one of those themes. We see that God cares for the one, God cares for the individual. God cares for those who have wandered away, for those who are lost. We see that God cares enough. And I don't think that care is the right word. I think that we should say that He loves enough to take the initiative to find the lost. His love is not passive, it is active, it is a searching love, and I didn't work with the music committee or anything like that, but the song *The Reckless Love* fits right in with the message for tonight. It's a never-ending love. It's a love that takes risks, it's a love that goes out and searches until the lost are found. There was an English writer named G. K. Chesterton, late 1800s early 1900s, who coined the phrase "the furious love of God" to describe how God chases after us, chases after His sheep. Because in His love He – and in the story, the shepherd—goes out searching. He doesn't wait for the lamb to find its way home, because a lamb can't find its way home. It has no sense of direction. You know you hear stories about cats and dogs that are lost hundreds of miles away and they miraculously make their way home. You never hear that story about a sheep, because sheep can't find their way home. That's why the Bible calls us sheep, not some other animal. So the shepherd goes out and looks for the sheep, and he perseveres until he finds it. He doesn't give up, he doesn't throw up his hands when the going gets tough. When he has found the lost sheep, he grabs it up in his arms. Now here some commentators say that the lamb might have been so frantic that he actually had to be caught and gathered up, because in that frantic state he wouldn't have followed his shepherd home. I heard some commentator say that perhaps the lamb is so tired and worn out and beaten up from wandering that he has no strength to come home. But either way that you look at it, the shepherd takes the sheep up in his arms and carries it home. And then once he gets home, he throws a



Suppose one of you had a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not...go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' Luke 15:3-6

party—a huge celebration. We throw celebrations here in the United States and Canada when a team wins the Stanley Cup or the World Series. Or when some individual achieves something, like graduating from high school or college, we have a celebration for their achievement. We don't have a celebration for the return of somebody who has wandered off because of their own stupidity. But in the story there's a celebration when the lamb is brought back home. And this was the story that Jesus told, not just when faced with opposition from the scribes and the Pharisees but it was also the story of His life. It was the drama that He acted out during His earthly ministry, because He was the one who went out to look for the lost lamb. He was the sheep chaser because He was the shepherd who owned the sheep. And He wasn't just any shepherd. The Scriptures call Him the Good Shepherd. In John's gospel, John Chapter 10, Jesus actually first calls Himself the Good Shepherd. He says: I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. Now that idea and that image of a shepherd goes way back into the Old Testament. It was used of Yahweh in the Old Testament, in Psalm 23, when David wrote, "The Lord is my shep-

herd". And then in Ezekiel's prophecies, 34:11-12: *"This is what the sovereign Lord says, 'I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so I will look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness.'"* So Jesus takes this image and He applies it to himself. Now Christ's earthly mission was more than just braving the elements of being here on Earth. Sure, He faced the limitations of having a physical body and all the things that go along with that—being tired, being hungry, being injured. And He dealt with the different hardships that go with being human. He faced rejection from His own people, scorn and mocking, but He went even beyond those difficulties, because He laid down his life. And we know that not all rescue missions end in a safe manner. Not all of them have a happy ending like the one I mentioned at the beginning of the story. Last summer in Thailand, summer 2018, there was a group of soccer players, a group of 12-year-old Thai boys, and it turned out they went down into a cave, to see this cave, and when they were down there, the caves flooded and they got stuck down there for weeks. People were trying to figure out how to rescue

☞ Continues on page 19



What Are the Israelites Doing at Christmas?

For many years I have been able to observe the events in Jerusalem at Christmas. I would therefore like to answer the repeated question: What are the Israelites doing at Christmas? In this regard, I would divide the Israelis into three groups. The first, and perhaps largest, group have no idea at all of Christmas. They just don't realize it's Christmas time. An American or a European can hardly imagine it, but in Israel it's very easy. Christmas is not officially celebrated here, and everyday life follows its regular routine.

Then there are Israelis who love the Christmas-time atmosphere, and with wide-open eyes stare at the light-filled Christmas trees of their Christian neighbors. Even a few Christmas services in the Old Town are overcrowded with curious Israeli people, who absolutely do not know what the liturgical silence is about. They go through the church here and there, having fun and sighing at the beauty of the "Silent Night". The choir must be very brave, not to give up and stop singing into the reigning chaos. These types of Israelis also like to travel to America or Europe at Christmastime to enjoy the Christmas atmosphere, unlike American Jews, who live with the feeling that they have to defend their Jewish identity. The Israelis in this group were mostly born here and have served in the army. They do not feel threatened in their Jewish identity by a Christmas atmosphere.

In the third group I would include just the Israelis who have immigrated from America. They are happy to be rid of Christmas, and happy to live in a Jewish state and celebrate Jewish holidays. When I was learning Hebrew in an ulpan (Hebrew language course), an American Jew stated as the reason for his immigration that he could no longer tolerate the Christmas flurry, with Christmas carols heard in department stores from October on.

I have to say, I understand him quite well after seeing the American Christmas cabaret. I couldn't even believe my eyes when I saw dozens of dancers dressed up as Father Christmas, leaping to the tune of "Jingle Bells." This whole character of a good-natured grandfather with a red costume and a white beard confuses me. What has he to do with Jesus' birth in Bethlehem? I am glad to live in a country where Christmas is called "Chag ha-molad"—"Feast of Birth". Precisely because I



live here, I am reminded daily that Jesus, whose real name was Yeshua, was a Jew, and was neither European nor American. He had to be completely different from what I had always imagined.

One of the first things I noticed in Israel was the celebration of the Sabbath beginning on Friday evening. I thought, "It's like Christmas every week!" Families are preparing for the holiday. It is planned beforehand—what is to be cooked and baked, and is purchased accordingly. Everything has to be clean and ready by Friday, and the whole family will gather in the evening in formal ceremony. Every week there is chala on the table—a shabbat bread that is remarkably similar to our Christmas bread. But it's not just planning, it's the expectation that the Sabbath will come. It's a family celebration every week, similar to our Christmas celebration. That's why many Christian families around me here in Israel move Christmas to Friday. So this year they will celebrate on either the 21st or the 28th of December. After all, no one knows the exact day when Jesus was born anyway.

The candles we use on the Christmas tree are exactly the same candles used for the Hanukkah holiday, called the Feast of Light. Light shining in the darkness is also what we love at Christmas. So, if anyone really wants to escape the hustle and bustle of Christmas, let them come to the country where Jesus was born.

Krista Gerloff, Jerusalem, Israel

Taken from Rozsėvač 12/2019





A jsou tu opět Vánoce

To znamená, že:

Bůh tak miloval svět, že dal svého jediného Syna, aby žádný, kdo v něho věří, nezahynul, ale měl život věčný (Jan 3, 16). **Neboť Bůh**, který řekl: „Ze tmy ať zazáří světlo, osvětlil naše srdce, aby nám dal poznat světlo své slávy ve tváři Kristově“ (2 K 4, 6). „**Vy však jste z Boží moci v Kristu Ježíši; on se nám stal moudrostí od Boha, spravedlností, posvěcením a vykoupením, jak je psáno: Kdo se chlubí, ať se chlubí v Pánu**“ (1K 1, 30).



„**Vyznás-li svými ústy Ježíše jako Pána a uvěříš-li ve svém srdci, že ho Bůh vzkřísil z mrtvých, budeš spasen. Srdcem věříme k spravedlnosti a ústy vyznáváme k spasení**“ (Ř 10, 9–10). „**Kdo je v Kristu, je nové stvoření. Co je staré, pominulo, hle, je tu nové! To všechno je z Boha, který nás smířil sám se sebou skrze Krista**“ (2 K 5 17–18a). „**Nikdo z nás nežije sám sobě a nikdo sám sobě neumírá. Žijeme-li, žijeme Pánu, umíráme-li, umíráme Pánu. Ať žijeme, ať umíráme, patříme Pánu.**“ „**Vždyť proto Kristus umřel i ožil, aby se stal Pánem i mrtvých i živých**“ (Ř 14, 7). „**Ať tedy jíte či pijete či cokoli jiného děláte, všechno činite k slávě Boží**“ (1K 10, 31). „**Je-li Bůh s námi, kdo proti nám? On nešetřil svého vlastního Syna, ale za nás za všechny jej vydal; jak by nám spolu s ním nedaroval všechno?**“ (Ř 8, 31–32). „**Jedinému moudrému Bohu buď skrze Ježíše Krista sláva na věky věků. Amen**“ (Ř 16, 27).

Tak máš opravdové Vánoce?

Mirek Jersák

Taken from Rozsévač 12/2019

And It's Christmas Again

This means that:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life, (John 3:16). **For God**, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ, (2 Cor. 4:6). **It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord,”** (1 Cor. 1:30–31).

If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved, (Rom. 10:9–10). **Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ,** (2 Cor. 5:17–18). **For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living,** (Rom. 14: 7–9). **You must do everything for the glory of God, even your eating and drinking,** (1 Cor.10:31). **If God is on our side, who can ever be against us? Since he did not spare even his own Son for us but gave him up for us all; won’t he also surely give us everything else? (Rom. 8:31–32) To God, who alone is wise, be the glory forever through Jesus Christ our Lord, amen,** (Rom.16:27).

So have you got a real Christmas?

Mirek Jersák

Taken from Rozsévač 12/2019



Henry Pojman

April 16, 1950 – December 8, 2019

Our dear brother in Christ Henry Pojman went to be with the Lord. Henry Pojman has been a Financial

Secretary of the Czechoslovak Baptist convention for 21 years.

More info will be available in the next issue of the *Glorious Hope*. □

Joseph Frank Jersak

October 20, 1931 – October 21, 2019



Joe Jersak went to be with his Lord on October 21, 2019, at the age of 88 years.

Joe was born on the family farm in the Floradale District, to William and Eugenia Jersak. He attended the Floradale country school from grades 1 to ,8.

As a teenager, he accepted the Lord Jesus as his personal Saviour. He was baptized and continued to

live out his faith for the rest of his life.

At 14, Joe began farming with his dad. This came about after his dad announced that he needed help with spring work. Joe threw his school books into a gunny sack, got onto his horse, Queenie, and left school, never to return. He farmed with his dad and brother until his marriage.

On July 8, 1953, he married Ruth Vinter. They experienced 66 years of commitment to one another through life's joys and sorrows. They were blessed with five children, who filled their lives with love and laughter.

During their marriage, Joe worked tirelessly on their small mixed farm with his partner, Ruth, to make ends meet. As the years went by, the farm operation expanded. His meticulous approach to farming, aided by advancements in technology and his complete trust in God, led to his successful career.

Joe was always ready to help his family wherever he was needed, whether that was helping build and fix houses in Alberta, helping look after grandkids, or giving moral support.

He volunteered his time and talents in many

capacities with the following organizations: the Czech Baptist Church, Wellman Lake Baptist Camp, Fields of Jubilee, Keystone Agricultural Producers and Canadian Foodgrains Bank. He also sang in the church choir and was instrumental in the building of Cornerstone Baptist Church. He was also a General Board member emeritus of the Czechoslovak Baptist Convention. The last few years we have been attending Temple Baptist Church in Swan River, Manitoba.

Joe enjoyed several memorable trips with Ruth to the Czech Republic, Hawaii, Mexico and Australia.

He was fiercely competitive when he participated in baseball, curling, bowling, golfing and playing card games with family.

Joe was a great family man and a man of integrity. He treated the people with whom he did business with respect and loyalty. In return, these businessmen respected and admired him. His wife, children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren filled his life with joy. His cheeky sense of humour put a smile on the face of everyone he met and will be dearly missed.

Joe is survived by his wife, Ruth; his five children, Betty (Paul) Schaufele, Tim (Grace) Jersak, Melodie (Ian) Hunt, Dianne (Dave) Brown, and Luella (Ron) Krueger; 13 grandchildren; 21 great-grandchildren; three sisters, Ann Moravec, Helen LeTissier and Evelyn (John) Ozdan; and numerous nieces and nephews.

Verses that Joe lived by were Proverbs 3:5–6:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and he will direct your paths.

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them and get them back. And there was one man, a thirty-eight-year-old husband and father. He had been a diver in the Thai navy, so he knew what he was doing. He took some oxygen and supplies and swam through those caves and delivered them to those boys, but on his way back, he ran out of oxygen. He didn't get back alive. And when I was preparing for this message, I came across a story about this, an opinion piece about the rescue attempts of those boys. That diver knew the mission to help the boys was dangerous. But that didn't stop him. He was willing to risk this life to save their lives. The writer of this article went on to say not only do these stories move us and inspire us, but there is a greater reason to tell these stories. You see, we all need the reminder that sacrificial love is woven into the very fabric of our universe, because these rescue missions are the story of history itself. We as people, we have rebelled and we have gone from God and we don't have the way back. We need somebody to come and rescue us, to save us and bring us back into relationship with God. And that's exactly what Jesus did. He gave his life so that we could be saved. He left the comfort and security of heaven; He came in search of us. He would not be deterred by anything that was put in His path. Nothing distracted Him, nothing sidelined Him, He went all the way to His death, and He gave up his life for us. So He told a story of the rescue mission, He lived out the story of the rescue mission, and this is the story that He invites us to become a part of. It's an ongoing story because until Christ returns and history ends, there will always be lost sheep. Whether they realize it or not, they are lost without Christ. And that's the story that He invites us to become active members, active participants in.

As we go towards the end of my message tonight, I'd like to ask a quick question: What group are we in? Remember I mentioned at the beginning of the sermon there were two groups; there were

the tax collectors and sinners who were gathering near to hear Jesus. And there were the Pharisees and the teachers of the law that grumbled and complained because Jesus opened Himself up to the other group of people. Are we with those who are gathering to hear Christ, or are we on the side that are gathering to sneer at those people that we consider lost? We always need to remember that we're saved by grace. In Christ saving us, we have been given a wonderful gift. It's not anything that we deserve; it's not anything that we have earned. We're not saved by our own merits. We're not saved because we are worthy of it, of somebody going out and risking their life for us. It's all because of His love; it's all of His grace towards us. He's the one who came searching for us, He's the one who took us up in His arms, and He's the one who carried us home and saved us. And we all know that in our heads, and we think back to the moment when we were saved, when we gave our hearts to Christ.

But I think at least in my life and some circles that I've been in over time, we find if we've been Christians for a while, we begin to think and act as if we're pretty good. We're down the road of sanctification a ways, and we have our act together. And the others, out in the world around us, they need to clean up their act, they need to get themselves straightened out, and that's especially true in the world that we live in today, as we see the two worlds become much more polarized. And with the things that are happening in the United States and Canada and the rest of the world, I think it's easier for us to slip into the mentality that it's us against them, that we need to stay with like-minded people, and that we need to be safe in our congregations — to put up walls and to retreat, to seek safety among people who talk like us and act like us and hold the same core convictions that we do. But I would encourage you and I would encourage myself to check our hearts and to check our attitudes. Let us draw

near to Jesus, and when we draw near to Him, we will hear Him saying: I came to seek and save the lost. I came to call sinners to repentance. I didn't come for the healthy; I came for the sick, because it's the sick that need a doctor. So let's check our hearts and our attitudes and guard ourselves against drawing back into those safe havens. Because if we are His, His mission is also our mission; His story is also our story that we should be living out. From the beginning, the Christian faith has been missional. What did Christ tell His disciples before He returned to heaven? He told them to go and make disciples of all nations. He said to them, you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. In the book of Acts, it recounts how this new faith, this Gospel message, went out and left Jerusalem, and began to spread all the way to Rome. And if we look at our history, we can see how this little mustard seed, this little tiny thing, faith in Christ, the Gospel of Christ went out and it toppled kingdoms. Jesus said the gates of hell would not prevail against us. So let's check our hearts and let's check our attitudes and make sure that we're not withdrawing back into our safe havens but let us be willing to go out and be engaged and involved with people who don't look like us and don't think like us and who live very different lifestyles, because just as Jesus loves us, He loves them as well. I heard somebody say one time that the Gospel is really just one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread. We've received the bread of life. Let's make sure we tell others about the bread of life. And we've been rescued. Jesus has come, and He's brought us back home. Let's be willing to do that for other people. So my prayer for you as a Convention, as you go back to various churches across the United States and Canada, is that you remember that you have been rescued, Jesus has rescued us; He's the Sheep Chaser, and He invites us to be a part of that mission as well.

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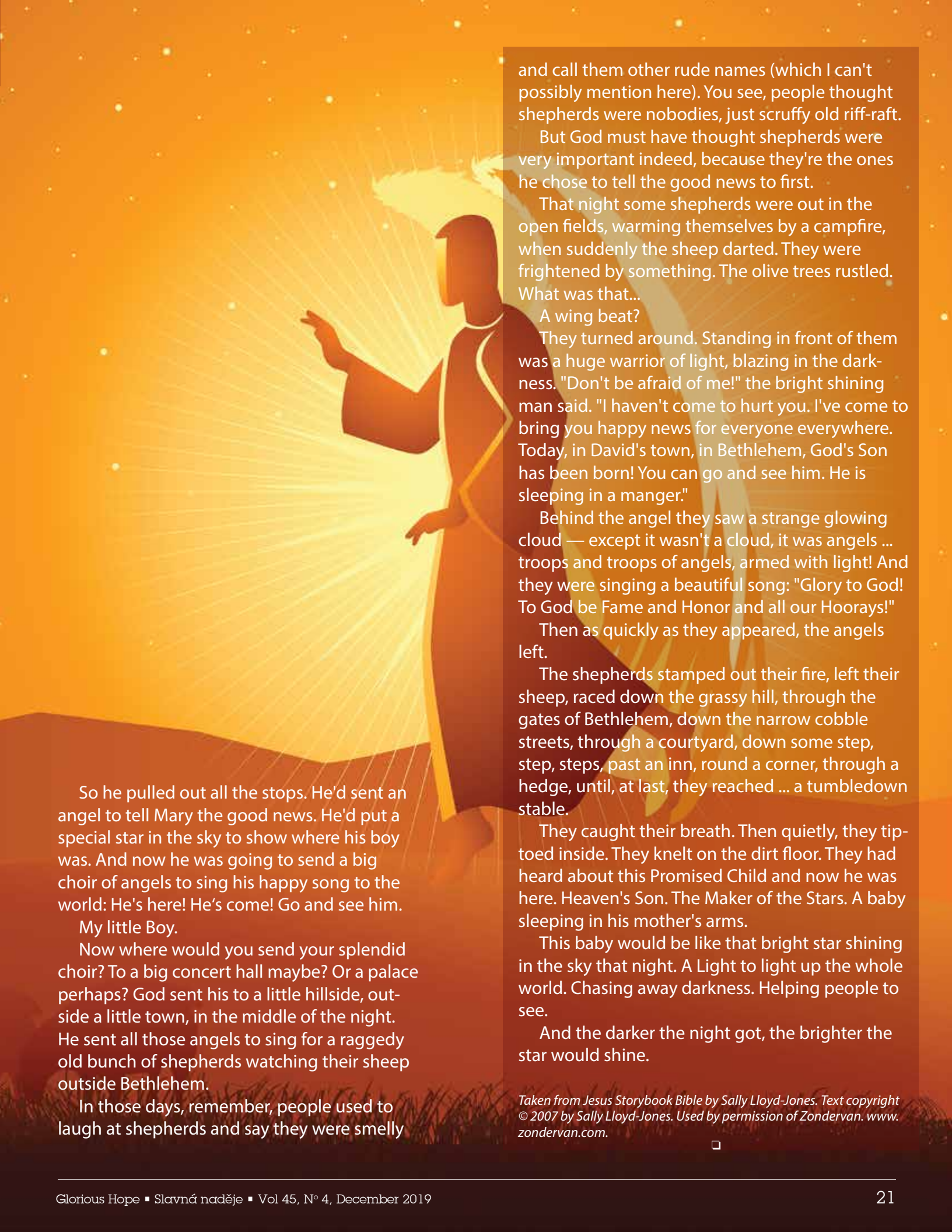
The Light of the whole world

The story of the shepherds, from Luke 2

That Same Night, in amongst the other stars, suddenly a bright new star appeared. Of all the stars in the dark vaulted heavens, this one shone clearer. It blazed in the night and made the other stars look pale beside it.

God put it there when his baby Son was born—to be like a spotlight. Shining on him. Lighting up the darkness. Showing people the way to him.

You see, God was like a new daddy — he couldn't keep the good news to himself. He'd been waiting all these long years for this moment, and now he wanted to tell everyone.



and call them other rude names (which I can't possibly mention here). You see, people thought shepherds were nobodies, just scruffy old riff-raff.

But God must have thought shepherds were very important indeed, because they're the ones he chose to tell the good news to first.

That night some shepherds were out in the open fields, warming themselves by a campfire, when suddenly the sheep darted. They were frightened by something. The olive trees rustled. What was that...

A wing beat?

They turned around. Standing in front of them was a huge warrior of light, blazing in the darkness. "Don't be afraid of me!" the bright shining man said. "I haven't come to hurt you. I've come to bring you happy news for everyone everywhere. Today, in David's town, in Bethlehem, God's Son has been born! You can go and see him. He is sleeping in a manger."

Behind the angel they saw a strange glowing cloud — except it wasn't a cloud, it was angels ... troops and troops of angels, armed with light! And they were singing a beautiful song: "Glory to God! To God be Fame and Honor and all our Hoorays!"

Then as quickly as they appeared, the angels left.

The shepherds stamped out their fire, left their sheep, raced down the grassy hill, through the gates of Bethlehem, down the narrow cobble streets, through a courtyard, down some step, step, steps, past an inn, round a corner, through a hedge, until, at last, they reached ... a tumbledown stable.

They caught their breath. Then quietly, they tiptoed inside. They knelt on the dirt floor. They had heard about this Promised Child and now he was here. Heaven's Son. The Maker of the Stars. A baby sleeping in his mother's arms.

This baby would be like that bright star shining in the sky that night. A Light to light up the whole world. Chasing away darkness. Helping people to see.

And the darker the night got, the brighter the star would shine.

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So he pulled out all the stops. He'd sent an angel to tell Mary the good news. He'd put a special star in the sky to show where his boy was. And now he was going to send a big choir of angels to sing his happy song to the world: He's here! He's come! Go and see him.

My little Boy.

Now where would you send your splendid choir? To a big concert hall maybe? Or a palace perhaps? God sent his to a little hillside, outside a little town, in the middle of the night. He sent all those angels to sing for a raggedy old bunch of shepherds watching their sheep outside Bethlehem.

In those days, remember, people used to laugh at shepherds and say they were smelly

Mark & Gretchen Potma

1989–2019

The Velvet Revolution of 1989 was followed by the Velvet Divorce of 1993, when the former Czechoslovakia split into two separate countries, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. In 1999 the Czech Republic joined NATO and later, in 2003, became a member state of the European Union. Then in 2008 the Czech Republic abolished all border controls with its neighboring countries, joining half a billion EU citizens who enjoy free movement of people, goods, services, and capital within the EU borders.

Today there is complete freedom of religion in the Czech Republic. Czechs are free to believe – or not to believe. Not only because of Communism, the Czech Republic is now the #1 most irreligious nation in the world. Catholics presently make up 10% of the population and Protestants are 1%. All other world religions and cults combined make up less than 1%. More than 80% of Czechs are atheist or irreligious.



The news is not all bad, though. Czech evangelicals now represent 0.5% of the population, up from 0.2% thirty years ago. For example, the Czech denomination that TEAM has been working with since 1991 has grown from 34 to 77 local churches in 30 years.

Mark was the first TEAM missionary to enter the former Czechoslovakia in 1991, and since then, 67 long-term and mid-term missionaries and hundreds of short-term missionaries have served with TEAM in the Czech Republic. TEAM missionaries have helped to establish new churches and strengthen existing church-planted churches at 20 locations.

What are we seeing God doing?

Recently Mark has had opportunities to connect with



church planters, pastors, and visionaries around the Czech Republic as well as to preach, both in Prague and elsewhere.

- Mark preached in Litomyšl on November 3rd. The church has initiated creative outreach to students through music, English, and relationship building.

- Petr, a church-planting leader in Brno, has asked Mark to mentor him in developing a network of new church plants. One of his pastoral

interns, Aleš, was a new believer in 2012 when he went with Mark to a biblical conference in Germany.

- The church in Plzeň has asked Dan to be their new pastor. Previously Dan was a pastoral intern under Mark's supervision at South City Church, where we ministered together for 20 years.

- At a recent gathering of Czech mission agencies, Mark and Gretchen heard personally about exciting new developments in the new church plant in Ostrava and how beneficial the M4 church-planter training was.

- At a church-planting conference in Brno, Mark met with up with Vláša, a church-planting pastor in Vysoké Mýto whom he had coached for two years and was encouraged with updates about the ministry there.

- Mark has a meeting scheduled with David, a visionary leader from Cheb who wrote the following:

Dear Mr. Potma,

However strange it might sound, I am writing to you from the future. My name is David, and right now I am writing from a church that doesn't exist yet: Církev bratrská Cheb. In a way I am the only member of that church right now. When you look at the map of churches, west of Karlovy Vary, there is nothing... We do not want to plan things for God but at the same time do the maximum that we can...

See you soon! In Him, David

- Mark has met three times with a church-planting team from Barrandov preparing to launch a new church in a district in the southwest of Prague.

- The leaders of a small church in Zbraslav have asked for help from our denomination's "7Z" church-planting task force. Mark and pastor Tomáš Grulich will be meeting with them on December 1st.

Praise the Lord for Czech leaders like David, Vláša, Dan, Tomáš, Petr, and Aleš, who see visions of what God wants to do in their cities and the Czech Republic for His glory!

Ben's Missions Trip to Guatemala



Dan and Ester beginning ministry in Plzeň

Ben will be going on a 10-day missions trip to Guatemala with his 12th-grade class at the end of January. Ben's Christian school in Ontario is partnering with a Christian school in Guatemala, and Ben and his classmates will be sharing God's Word in the community through youth events and VBS and helping with maintenance on the school property. Ben is asking for prayer in the following:

- For his walk with God and love for the people.
- That God would provide for his needs for the trip.
- That he would be an encouragement to his team.

We have recently discovered bike-sharing rentals in Prague!

It is an easy and cheap way to enjoy many of Prague's beautiful parks and riverside bike paths.

Prayer Points:

1. PRAISE the Lord for freedom to worship and spread the Gospel in the Czech Republic. PRAY for countries where freedom of religion is limited and believers are still persecuted.
2. PRAY for much spiritual fruit from the weekly services and outreach activities of our churches and from personal contacts with our church members.
3. Please continue to PRAY for Ben, Noemi and Luke at school and work in Windsor and for Elise with us here.
4. God is not finished with the Czech Republic yet. PRAY that Czech believers and leaders will have a vision for even greater things to come!

Grateful for 30 years of freedom,

Mark, Gretchen, Luke Noemi, Ben, Elise

PRAYER UPDATE

...Come and See!

Philip said, "Come and see." John 1:46

South City Church celebrated its 15th anniversary at a special combined service on October 13th, with over 130 people worshipping God together. PRAISE the Lord with us for His provision and blessing over the years! A work team from Ontario was also in attendance, after having finished up a week of renovations and repair in the former boiler building which has been the permanent home of South City Church for the past five years.

Gretchen is helping to get a parenting course off the ground in Bohnice. One of the big hurdles is a place to meet. PRAY that the leaders will find a suitable meeting space, and that this course will meet a real and felt need in the Bohnice community. Please PRAY also that those who attend would respond to the Christian message presented in the course and to the Christians who are leading this outreach.

Mark has been invited to preach at several different churches over the next seven weeks. Four are part of our own network of churches, and another three are invitations to preach elsewhere. Please PRAY for wisdom and boldness through the proclamation of the gospel, and that God's Word will continue to transform lives here in the Czech Republic.

Sun, Oct 27 Skalka Church

Sun, Nov 3 Litomyšl Church

Sun, Nov 10 South City Church

Sun, Nov 17 Praha Bethel Korean Church

Sun, Nov 24 Černý Most Church

Sun, Dec 1 Bohnice Church

Sun, Dec 8 Ládví Church



15th anniversary service at South City Church




Daniel welcoming three new Mongolian members

In September we welcomed five new members into our fellowship: three at the Mongolian church, one at Ládví Church and one at Skalka Church. PRAISE the Lord that these believers have found a spiritual home, and PRAY that they will continue to grow in their faith. PRAY for others who are considering joining our fellowship, and for others who have not yet committed to being part of a body of believers.

Mark & Gretchen Potma



A winter scene with snow on a window sill and two pinecones in the foreground. The background is a window with snow on the glass and a white frame. The pinecones are dark brown and covered in snow. The text is in English and Czech.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

To Slovo se stalo tělem a přebývalo mezi námi. Spatřili jsme jeho slávu, slávu, jakou má od Otce jednorozený Syn, plný milosti a pravdy. (Jan 1:14)

To Slovo sa stalo telom a prebývalo medzi nami a my sme videli jeho slávu, slávu, akú má od Otca jednorodený Syn, plný milosti a pravdy. (Ján 1:14)