

Macedonia Update – April 2020

Dear friends,

In these days when we all are sailing through uncharted waters, we want to update you on the journey we are taking. After much prayer and reflection, Cindy and I have decided to wrap up our time of ministry in Macedonia and permanently relocate to the US.

We are deeply grateful to Parkside church for their many years of faithful provision for our spiritual and physical needs while serving in Skopje and Prague. Looking back, it was actually on today's exact date 25 years ago on April 17, 1995, that we first departed for Macedonia with our 3.5 children.

One factor that we have weighed while seeking God's guidance for this next phase of life, as I (Mike) anticipate turning 60 this summer, is the wisdom of getting re-established in a teaching career in America before reaching retirement age, at which time I hope to continue teaching at least part time. I am extremely thankful that God has opened the door of ministry to teach math and invest in the lives of young souls in a key stage of life at Westside Christian Academy in Westlake beginning in August. On her part, Cindy's plan is to set up a studio from which she can teach piano from our home and online. She will also be able to be of more assistance to her aging mother.

The Covid-19 situation made bringing closure to life and ministry in Macedonia more challenging than we had anticipated. The language center, our key means of connecting with Macedonians, had to close one month before we left. Our goodbyes to most of our Macedonian friends were not face-to-face. But we trust that God has good purposes in it all. After some complicated travel, we recently arrived in Cleveland for a 3-month home-service.



My last view of the stone bridge in Skopje during social distancing.

These past weeks God has consistently reminded me to practice what I recently preached from Phil. 2:14-18. When tempted to grumble while walking luggage across the Kosovo border in the pouring rain, or facing inconveniences of quarantine and canceled plans, I strive to remember that as believers these struggles are actually great opportunities to **shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life**. Our response to

this pandemic should be strikingly different from that of the world. As we are surrounded by people struggling with fear, they should notice that we don't fear death and uncertainty in the same way, and we should be ready for opportunities when some ask us for the reason for the hope that is in us (1 Peter 3:15).



One event that has overshadowed any discouraging circumstances has been the joyous birth of our first grandchildren! The adorable twin daughters Maya and Marie were born to our daughter Hannah and her husband Joe on April 4th. It was a special blessing that Cindy had finished her quarantine in time to arrive at Hannah's home in Illinois the day before their birth. She deeply valued the opportunity to be of help during their first week home.

Macedonia Update – April 2020

Looking ahead, it is a great encouragement that the language center ministry that we established in Macedonia will continue on, Lord willing, as a valuable platform for reaching the lost after the isolation policies have been completed. Our very capable younger teammates with SEND International will continue to teach English and German, and the small fellowship of believers that it feeds into will remain a place of hope in our former community.



We look forward to reconnecting with many of you in the coming months, as much as social distancing allows!

Warmly in Christ,
Mike and Cindy

*As an inspiration to use your time well during your isolation:
remember that Isaac Newton came up with Calculus
theorems while in isolation during the Bubonic plague.*

Items for prayer:

- Praise for the safe arrival of Maya and Marie, and pray for the joyful but challenging adjustment of Hannah and Joe to the world of parenting twins.
- Pray for our colleagues in Macedonia to continue to hold forth the word of truth despite the limitations of isolation policies
- Pray for God to continue to water the seeds planted in the hearts of our Macedonian students and friends.
- Pray for guidance as we seek to purchase a home in the community where God has plans to use us.
- Pray for both of us as we begin this new experience of teaching in America, that we would be equipped as teachers and our lives would be used to impact students academically and spiritually.