

## HOUSE UPDATE

On Friday, October 12, I *finally* received the building permit for my house! This is such a slow process in Croatia. But as of this writing, the stakes have been laid out for the corners of the foundation. I was hoping to get the foundation in before winter, but the builder says we need to wait until spring. Please pray for good weather and that we can begin before winter is over. There is a possibility I could be in the house by sometime in the summer (while still finishing it around myself). Pray also for a favorable exchange rate between the US Dollar and the Croatian Kuna. The house will be built by a local company called Domprojekt ([domprojekt.hr](http://domprojekt.hr)). They have won several energy efficiency and quality-versus-value awards. The front elevation is at left. In about 1,200 square feet, I will have three bedrooms, two bathrooms, and an open kitchen, dining, and living area. I am getting your guest room ready. Come visit me! Pray that this home will be both a place of personal rest and refuge, as well as ministry. A place where people feel the presence of God's Spirit and are drawn to Jesus.



## MUSINGS ON THE WORLD CUP

Croatia won 2nd place in the soccer World Cup this summer. This was a *big deal* for this small nation. The day the team came home was nothing short of thrilling. Their plane had an air force escort as it landed. It took the team (photo below) six hours to get downtown from the airport, because over 500,000 people had come out to greet them. Some gathered from early in the morning to celebrate. They waited downtown all day long. There were no reports of looting or violence. This gave me hope for the country, that we can also unify like this around more important things. It also gave me hope for the church here, to have more of a spirit of Kingdom unity and cooperation.



## PRAYER POINTS — 2019

- Pray for the fellowship of Jesus and the counsel of the Holy Spirit.
- Pray for God's next steps for me, the life He wants me to live, and the work He wants me to do in Croatia.
- Pray for grace, mercy, peace, and joy.
- Pray for friendships and close fellowship for me here.
- Pray that many children and youth will come to know Jesus through this work.
- Pray that a new generation will be raised up to follow Jesus, and be prepared to plant and lead churches in Croatia and the region.
- Pray for my work with the Zagreb Bible Institute staff and faculty, that we will grow strong working relationships.
- Pray for my continued progress in language acquisition. Pray that I will move to an even higher level of ability.
- Pray for continued, stable, and even some new financial support.
- Praise God for my building permit. Pray for all that is needed to complete the construction: good weather, finances, favorable exchange rate, efficient workers, and American friends who want to come help with some of the finishing details.
- Pray for unity and cooperation, instead of competition and jealousy, among the various churches and mission groups in Croatia. Pray for a growing spirit of cooperation, as mentioned on the front page.
- Pray God's protection over the missionaries and other servants of God in Croatia. Pray for health and strength in our bodies, hearts, souls, marriages, and homes.
- Pray for a greater hunger and thirst for Jesus in Croatia.
- Pray for natural, everyday opportunities to share Jesus with people.
- Pray that in all things the Kingdom of God is advanced in this place.

## CONTRIBUTIONS

You can use the Venmo mobile app. "Pond Springs Church" is the payee to search for, and my name should be written in the "What's it for?" section.

To donate online, click "give" on my website (address below).

Make physical checks payable to *Pond Springs Church* and mail to this address:

Pond Springs Church  
Steve Taliaferro Mission Fund  
c/o Jan Swinney  
621 S Baker Cr  
Leander, TX 78641

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## Steve Taliaferro 2018 Ministry Report

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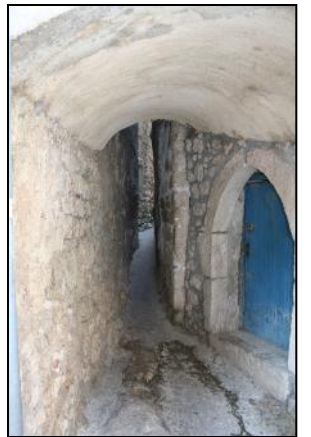
## GREETINGS FROM CROATIA

Dear Friends,

I hope you will enjoy reading here about my life and work in Croatia during 2018. You can always catch up with me at [steveincroatia.com](http://steveincroatia.com). A highlight of this year was our biggest and best ever Youth Camp (photo below). This summer saw World Cup fever in Croatia. Read my take on this on the back page.



Blessings to you,



## INTERESTING CROATIA FACTS

- The ancient Croatian script is called **Glagolitic**. This is Isus (Jesus) in Glagolitic:

ISUS

- The **Bašćanska Tablet** is the Croatian Rosetta Stone. It enabled the translation of Glagolitic.
- Most photos on this page were taken on the **Island of Krk**. This is where the Bašćanska Tablet was found. There is a named street here (photo above) that is only 16 inches wide.

## FISHING FOR PEOPLE...AND HOPE

The photos at top and bottom of this page remind me of these words of Jesus, as he called his first disciples, two fishermen:

*"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." At once they left their nets and followed him.*  
**Matthew 4:19-20**

Admittedly, Croatia is not easy for people fishing. Evangelism is a slow, laborious process. Jesus-following, Bible-believing Christians make up **less than 1/2 of 1%** of the population. Missionaries here fight with discouragement. One recently said, "God is just not favoring Croatia right now." It is easy to understand why this person thinks that. But God *is* at work here, and there is hope. Many people are hungry to better know Jesus, and understand the Bible and its truths. We have high enrollments this year in our Bible and Bible-related courses at the Zagreb Bible Institute. Fifteen evangelical churches in Zagreb, in a spirit of unity, cooperation, and *kingdom-mindedness*, organized a large, joint evangelistic event for the Christmas season. (I sang in the choir.)

Be not discouraged. He is here, he is at work, and what he is doing is for the good of the Kingdom and the redemption of Croatia. Read on to discover more of what God is doing here.



## BIBLE INSTITUTE NEWS

I continue in my role as Operations Manager at the Zagreb Bible Institute. As such, I had my hands in the financial and/or logistical aspects of the activities described here. In May, we hosted the board of the Central European Christian Education Foundation (CECEF) in Zagreb (photo at right) for a week of meetings, and learning about the impact of the Institute in Croatia and the region. CECEF is the Institute's support organization in the USA. In the summer, we hosted well-attended seminars on Marriage, Church Leadership, and Peacemaking, with guest speakers from Round Rock, Texas. In December, we hosted Dr. Richard Blackaby for a public lecture on the topic of his father Henry Blackaby's book, *Experiencing God*. This year we have focused on offering stand-alone courses that are of interest to both scholars and average church members, as well as the public; courses such as, *Book of Romans*, and, *How (Not) to Interpret the Bible*. We offered our first completely online course, with students from Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, Slovenia, and Germany. We also started our pursuit of accreditation as a scholarly research organization.



## CHAMPS CAMP VIII

In June, Champs Camp was held in two different locations in Zagreb. This was the 8th year we have organized these two weeks of Champs Camp. Each summer 100+ neighborhood children enjoy Bible lessons, crafts, games, skits, singing, and lots of fun. This year we had a fantastic group of 12 teenagers and 8 adults come to help from the Southside Church of Christ, in Lexington, Kentucky. We also had a group of almost 20 Croatian teenagers who helped with the camp. This year we added something new to the week of activities. The weekend before camp, we had all the American and Croatian teenagers together in the nearby town of Samobor, for training, fellowship, and team-building. Then after camp, we took all the teens for an overnight trip to the island of Krk. The purpose of all this is not only outreach to the children and their families, but also with the Croatian teen volunteers. We want them to get to know some other teens who have a relationship with Jesus. On the island of Krk that last night (large photo center), one of the Croatian teens said, "This has been life for me." Continue to pray for these young lives.

## A VISIT FROM SPONSORS

In March, I had a visit from David White and Keith Engman, from my sponsoring church in Austin, Texas, Pond Springs Church. Keith is one of the elders and has been here before, for Champs Camp. David is thinking of coming to help with some finishing details on my house. They spent two days with me in and around Zagreb, at the Bible Institute, and out on my property (photo below). Also with them was Chris Mueller, from Legacy Church in Florida. After their visit to Zagreb, I went with them for a few days to Arad, Romania, where their churches jointly support and encourage the work of several church leaders. While there, we visited these church leaders and their churches, helped with a children's ministry event, went to see the place where they conduct camps in the summers, and I preached in more than one church on Sunday. This was an encouraging visit, and a great time with these men.



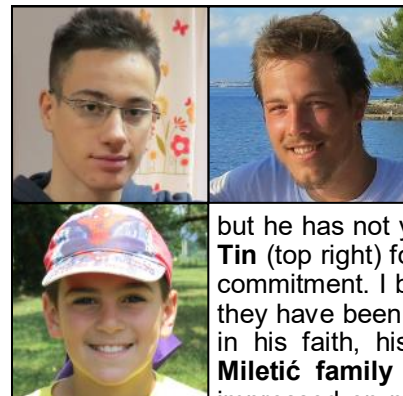
## YOUTH CAMP



In July, we were in Tuk Vojni, in the mountains of Croatia, for our annual youth camp. This is a camp I started four years ago. Now I have the help of several other Croats each summer. We also had friends from Slovenia who came to help. This summer was the best camp yet, and the best attended, with 27 youth. We spent five days learning around the topic of "Reign Forever," thinking about the coming forever reign of Christ, and what life is like in his Kingdom. The youth also enjoyed times of worship, games, crafts, sports, etc. We had one evening with American style S'mores around a campfire. We had several teens with us who have been contacted through other outreach efforts of our church in Zagreb, and those of the Church of Christ in Varaždin. Several youth came from our Champs Camp. We are now looking forward and planning for a Winter Youth Retreat. We hope to have some of the same teens for that retreat, as well as some of the teen volunteers from Champs Camp.

## SERVICE IN THE CHURCH

I also continue to serve in several ways with our congregation in Zagreb. I am still preaching about once every four to six weeks, in rotation with three others. We usually all preach on a coordinated theme, or out of the same book of the Bible. This fall, I preached my first sermon in Croatian! This was quite a personal accomplishment. I am also helping with the group that leads worship on Sundays. I continue to work with our youth however I can; in camp settings, and meeting with them individually. I have also started thinking and praying with several men in the congregation about doing a men's retreat. For Easter this year, several of us spent the few weeks before that Sunday preparing a very special Easter worship service. We focused on the crucifixion, and even more so, the resurrection, and what both events accomplished for us. At one point in the service, everyone was invited to write their sins on pieces of paper, and to fix them to a wooden cross. Then we poured wine all over the cross, drenching the "sins," and running onto a cloth on the floor that was wrapped around the foot of the cross. Then, as we began talking about the resurrection, everyone was invited to come "bloom the cross" (photo at right). It was a moving and meaningful experience for all who were there.



## DISCIPLING AND MENTORING

This same question came from several unrelated sources this fall: "Who are the people you are meeting with regularly in a purposeful discipling relationship?" Several people have also been on my heart lately. This has been a clear call of God to me, to spend more regular time with these people, encouraging them in their walk with Jesus. And I have begun to do that. I have been discipling **Melkior** (top left) since I moved here. His heart is open to Jesus but he has not yet made the personal decision to follow him. I have also had some level of relationship with **Tin** (top right) for a few years. He was away from the Lord for some time, but then came back with a strong commitment. I baptized him, and also participated in his wedding ceremony. He and his wife love Jesus but they have been away from our fellowship for some months. I am reconnecting with Tin and encouraging him in his faith, his commitment to the fellowship of God's people, and his service in the Kingdom. The **Miletić family** (son Kristijan in photo at bottom) has participated in Champs Camp. I feel the Lord has impressed on my heart to develop a relationship with them. **Tomislav Topić** and **Petar Tešić** are young men I have known for many years. They are involved in the leadership of a local church and need some encouragement in that work. Please pray for these (mostly) young men, and for me, as I purpose to spend more regular time with them.