

NEŠTO VIŠE (SOMETHING MORE)

This is the name of the Croatian non-profit organization we registered to be the public and legal face of the ministries for youth we are doing in the community. Our motto is, "Together through life, created for more." In addition to our camps and youth meetings, we continue to produce and distribute our **spiritual magazine for youth**. This is created and edited by my co-worker, Mateja. We have been working to increase the circulation and reach of the magazine. For each edition we have several guest writers, as well as interviews with youth with whom we are working. The cover of the summer edition is pictured at right. This fall we hosted the first of what we hope will be a series of **seminars for parents**. This seminar was taught by our friends from the USA, Justin and Jennifer Gerhardt. The seminar was titled, *The Storied Family: A Seminar for Heroic Parents*. We are soon re-starting our **youth band and choir**, which we had to suspend last year, due to Covid restrictions. We also hope to get into several schools early next year, to present our programs.



OASIS CONFERENCE

This fall I served in a different way. I did background logistics for an annual conference for women in ministry from around the Balkans called, *Oasis: Spiritual Rehydration*. I designed and produced printed materials, and served on-site with needed logistics.



PRAYER POINTS — 2022

- Pray for the fellowship of Jesus and counsel of the Holy Spirit; the life God wants me to live, and the work He wants me to do; that it is done in and through me.
- Pray for grace, mercy, peace, and joy.
- Pray for friendships and close fellowship for me here. God has been answering that prayer this last year in a personal way that has blessed me greatly.
- Pray that this generation of young people in Croatia are raised up to follow Jesus.
- Pray that "my boys" (Maks, Jan, Raybod, David, and Leon) will trust Jesus for life.
- Pray for confidence and increased leadership ability as I lead these ministries.
- Pray for strong working relationships and good interactions with Mateja and Igor.
- Pray for favor toward us and our ministry from schools and government offices.
- Pray for continued financial support; for myself; for Mateja and Igor; as well as for our camps, youth magazine, youth band and choir, and other ministry initiatives.
- Pray that we can continue camps, band and choir, and other group activities.
- Praise and thank God along with me for my house. Pray that it will be a place of both refuge and ministry, for me and for others. Pray that the house will be a place where people feel the presence of God's Spirit and are drawn to Jesus.
- Pray for unity and cooperation, instead of competition and jealousy, among the various churches and mission groups in Croatia. Pray for healthy relationships.
- 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; and for the protection of relationships. Pray that the enemy's plans are thwarted.
- 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.

TO SEND DONATIONS

On the Venmo mobile app, find *Pond Springs Church* as the payee. Note that it is for the Steve Taliaferro Croatia Mission.

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 Croatia Mission
c/o Jan Swinney
621 S Baker Cir
Leander, TX 78641

PERSONAL WEBSITE

steveincroatia.com

EMAIL

steveincroatia@gmail.com

POSTAL ADDRESS

Steven Taliaferro
Ivanska ulica 57, Jagnjić dol
10431 Sveta Nedelja
Croatia

CROATIAN MOBILE

+385-91-155-5161

SKYPE

Skype Name: steventaliaferro
Skype Phone: +1-512-481-7440



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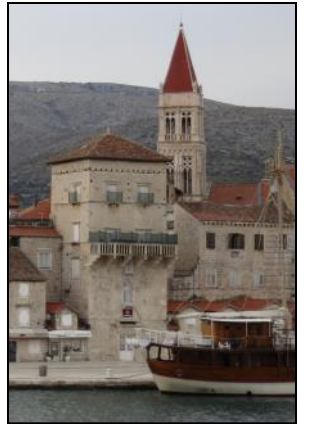
GREETINGS FROM CROATIA

Dear Friends,

I hope you will enjoy reading here about my life and work in Croatia during 2021. You can also always catch up with what is happening with me and my work on my personal website at steveincroatia.com. A highlight of this year continues to be the on-going personal discipling relationships with several young men. And God keeps bringing to me more of these precious souls. Read on for more about this.



Blessings to you,



INTERESTING CROATIA FACTS

- The town of **Trogir** (above) dates back to the 3rd century BC. There are multiple layers of buildings buried under the present old town center.
- **Čevapčići** are something of a national dish. They are ground meat mixed with spices, formed into small sausage shapes, and grilled. Yum!
- Evangelical Christians make up **less than 1/2 of 1%** of the population of Croatia.



CAMPS AND YOUTH MEETINGS

We were able to hold our camps this summer as (semi) normal. **Champs Camp** was in June. For Champs Camp we had 16 teenage volunteers who helped make it happen. We had a smaller number of campers than ever, but we paired them up with the teens as big and little brothers and sisters. It worked well and made things personal and special for these kids. We learned from this that smaller is not necessarily worse. We also made amazing connections with these teenagers, many of whom then came to our **Youth Camp**, which was in July. The theme for Youth Camp was, *Epic: The Story God is Telling*, in which we presented the gospel in a fresh way, using examples from stories that they love. Local restrictions on group gatherings continued here into May, then came the summer break. We were glad to be able to restart our regular **youth meetings** this fall. We decided to center these activities at the building where our church currently meets. We are finding a mission field with the teens from families right in our own church, and many of the kids with whom we work from outside our church live in this part of the city. Several of the teens from the camps are also attending these youth meetings.



MAKS

Maks and his family are part of our church congregation, and I have known them for several years. I also taught Maks one year in our church Sunday school. At that time he didn't seem very interested in the things of God. Maks participates in many of our activities, when his soccer schedule allows (he is goalkeeper). He is developing into a fine young man and is fun and a joy to be around. He is also developing a keen interest in the Bible and a hunger to know Jesus. When I asked him if he would like to meet with me each week for mentoring and Bible study, he was eager to accept. A hiking trip this summer cemented our friendship and we have a mutual respect for each other. While on that trip, he asked if we could have even more time together this school year. For his age, Maks has good insight into the scriptures. We have been talking recently about trust, and surrender of our lives to Jesus. Pray for Maks to take that faith step.

DAVID

David's family are part of our church and I have known him since he was a very young boy. Up until last year it was not apparent that he was really interested in spiritual matters. We started meeting together, to discuss life and study the Bible, at the beginning of the last school year, when he was a senior in high school. He told me then that he believes in God, but that he has a good life and so doesn't really see his need for Jesus. We met all throughout the school year, and through this time, he began to see his need for Jesus. We then started talking about our need to trust Jesus with our lives. We took a break in the summer around the time of his (very difficult) state exams for graduating high school. David is now studying Economics in college and our meetings are not as regular as before. Pray that he will still be open to time with me, and that he will decide to surrender his life to Jesus.



LEON



Leon came to us through our Champs Camp. He was at first a camper, and then became a teen volunteer. As a camper he was often a problem. After one extra year as a camper, to see how he would mature, we let him be a volunteer, and he did well. Leon is a kid who needs a lot of encouragement from older people investing in his life. He is often uncertain of himself and insecure. He doesn't have many friends and feels lonely a lot of the time. He is responding to this kind of attention given to him and he participates in many of our activities. His parents are thankful for this and have also attended our seminar for parents. Leon meets with me often for mentoring or Bible study. I sometimes either drive him to school (he lives about an hour by bus from his school), or pick him up from school and we have a visit either before or after, on the way to or from his home. He asks for these times and seems to look forward to them. Pray for Leon to experience Jesus as friend.

JAN

Jan is a young man who needs some input from encouraging adults in his life. His parents divorced this year; he has been struggling in school; and sometimes seems a little lost. Jan has been involved in some of our activities, and was a teen volunteer for our Champs Camp this summer. He plays guitar and seems interested in our Youth Band and Choir. He was with us playing guitar at the band and choir rehearsal we had last year, before the Covid crisis temporarily shut that down. I think he will be a vital part of the band as we restart it. We hope this will be a way to get him more involved and connected. Last year I invited Jan to begin meeting with me, to study the Bible together. He accepted and we have been meeting regularly since then. He seems eager for our time together and I think he is encouraged by it. I usually meet him at home, one week at his Mom's house, and the next week at his Dad's place. Jan is smart and generally quiet, but also enjoys a good joke. He has good insight into the scriptures for a young man his age. He is always eager to study the Bible with me. Pray that Jan will be encouraged in life; that he will look to Jesus for answers; that the Holy Spirit will grow in him an increasing desire to know Jesus; and that he will decide to commit his life to Jesus.



RAYBOD

Raybod is an Iranian refugee who came to Croatia this summer after walking all the way from Iran. He's heard about religion, and the god he has heard about doesn't sound too attractive to him. But, he's asking questions. Wants to know more about this Jesus. He told me that he has not chosen his religion, and asked if I would help him know Jesus. Before this, he knew nothing about Jesus. It has been a great joy to me to help him understand that when we talk about Jesus, we are not talking about religion, but about his life. In the photo at left Raybod is reading from his Farsi Bible and me my English one. Reading about a God who is LOVE...amazing thought! I have been on holy ground in our times together. It has been truly amazing watching the absolute wonder in his eyes as he discovers the God who has loved him since before he was born. The God who comes for him like a good shepherd comes for his sheep. Pray for this precious young God seeker whose life has already been more challenging than many of us can even imagine. Pray that he will encounter Jesus, the One who loves him, in dreams and visions. Pray that the evil one will not have opportunity in his life.