

Dear Prayer Partners

*“For from his fullness we have all received, **grace upon grace.**”* (John 1:16). This past year, I have experienced waves of God's grace in both painful things as well as in good things. I was blessed to be a part of many good things in 2017:

- Teaching both Old Testament and New Testament Introductory courses in Karlovac.
- Facilitating William Boekestein's class on eschatology in Osijek.
- Facilitating Eugene Oldham's class on pneumatology in Osijek.
- Teaching Christ-Centered preaching at conferences in Romania and Ukraine.
- Preaching each month in Karlovac and Zagreb, since September at least 3x a month
- Participating in Bible studies on Daniel, the Minor Prophets, James, and 1&2 Peter
- Getting to know more people in Karlovac (in the dog park, in cafes, the bank, etc.)
- Participating in the graduation ceremony for 5 graduates from 4 Balkan countries at the Mihael Starin Protestant Theological Seminary in Osijek.
- Attending my daughter, Kate graduation from Seattle Pacific University
- Spending quality time with my 3 daughters. (I climbed Mt. Rainier with Kristina)
- Getting to know Josiah Parkhurst, my future son-in-law and his family in Ohio
- Selling our house in PA, emptying it, keeping some things and blessing others with the rest.
- Visiting most of the churches and individuals who financially support me.
- Seeing the Reformation History Center completed and officially opened.
- Attending the nationally televised Reformation's 500th anniversary celebration in the Croatian National Theater (HNK – comparable to the Kennedy Center in the USA), where the Reformed Church in Tordinici was recognized as the oldest Protestant church in Croatia (since 1540's).
- Meeting and talking with former Prime Minister Tihomir Orešković in Zagreb
- Seeing my colleagues interviewed on Croatian TV & radio because of the Reformation 500th
- Restarting worship services in English in Zagreb
- Planning, preparing and traveling to the USA to raise funds to purchase a building for a church and seminary branch campus in Karlovac with my colleague Almir.
- Spending time with Almir, Asim, Domogoj and others in Karlovac, Kresimir, Igor and Davor in Zagreb
- Seeing Alfred, an African refugee, friend whom I helped, now living in Slovenia, working and building a life there.
- Facilitating \$1720 in donations for 14 food packages (boxes) going to 15 + families and over \$900 set aside as a reserve “deacons/mercy” fund to help those in need.

Challenges of 2017:

- Ana left me, filed for and obtained a divorce in the Croatian court system.
- Having to tell my daughters, family, friends, colleagues, ITEM executive committee, Ascension Presbytery, and financial supporters about Ana's decision and the divorce. Discussing our history, my sins and mistakes in the marriage.
- Losing my friend and colleague, Jasmin Koso, whose theological views and attitudes took a bizarre “progressive” turn. He has resigned and left the church.
- Experiencing a head-on collision on RT.30 on Tuscarora Mountain (McConnellsburgh, PA).

Thanksgiving:

- I am grateful that my Croatian colleagues, ITEM, and Ascension Presbytery recognized that I am not the guilty party in this divorce and I am not disqualified from ordained gospel ministry.
- I am grateful for the family, friends, colleagues, and supporters who have surrounded me and have walked through the painful trauma of divorce with me.
- I am grateful for the personal counseling I have received from Rev. Almir Pehlic and Rev. Larry Ellenbaum.
- I am grateful neither I nor the other driver were killed or hurt in my auto accident. It is possible the accident 'saved' me from driving over the edge of the mountain in the dark.

In 2018, I look forward to:

- Spending more time with Dr. Milic in Osijek working on administration, library, and other projects
- Teaching Hermeneutics in January in Karlovac
- Teaching other classes as determined by Dr. Milic, Rev. Pehlic and current needs
- Participating in Evelyn and Josiah's wedding in May.
- Facilitating other ITEM classes and instructors in Croatia
- Teaching at ITEM pastors' conferences in other locations
- Helping rebuild Christ the Redeemer Church in Zagreb
- Continuing the fund-raising project for Christ the King Church in Karlovac

My prayer and desire for the year, 2018 may be a peaceful and productive year for myself as well as for you all. It is by God's grace and for his glory that we work at the great commission of making disciples of all nations.

Your brother in Christ,
Tom