

OVERSEAS FIELD REPORT



A publication dedicated to making known the ways in which God is showing Himself strong on the behalf of those who serve Him.

Joshua and Kelsie Steele

www.OFReport.com

October - December 2009

I MET THE "MARTIN LUTHER" OF THE CARPATHIANS



Meet Father Stepan (left). "For he that is not against us is on our part." (Mark 9:40)

Just after the beginning of CMO this past summer, we published the following account of our amazing meeting with a Catholic priest known as Father Stepan. This story originally appeared only on our blog and is reprinted below for the first time in *Overseas Field Report*.

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During our first CMO project in 2006, we showed *The Light of the World* in a very small village called Khashchovanya. By the time of that showing, we had already experienced a fair amount of resistance from Catholic priests in other villages. Thus I was quite surprised when we saw

the priest from Khashchovanya present at our showing along with his children! He viewed the entire film, and listened without objection to my Gospel presentation at the end.

That day, as we packed our gear and prepared to leave, he came over to chat with me. He introduced himself as Father Stepan, and said, "You guys are protestants, right?" I gave him some type of diplomatic answer, the result of previous experience speaking with other priests, and then explained that we simply believe the Bible and preach salvation by grace through faith.

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How YOU Can Pray...

- ◆ Pray that God would bless and provide during our time in the US.
- ◆ Pray that we will be able to obtain new, long-term visas to Ukraine.
- ◆ Pray that existing issues with Ukrainian immigration law will be resolved, and that missionaries will be able to stay in the country on a continual basis.
- ◆ Pray that God would raise up men to join us for the CMO 2010 project.
- ◆ Praise the Lord for the many Ukrainians who have joined our Bible correspondence school as a result of CMO 2009 efforts.
- ◆ Pray for the continuing development of our Chronological Bible Course. We currently have 15 lessons completed.
- ◆ Praise the Lord for our new ETO staff family. Congratulations Mr. and Mrs. Nathan Day!! (more on page 2)

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BUT AS WE WERE ALLOWED OF GOD TO BE PUT IN TRUST WITH THE GOSPEL, EVEN SO WE SPEAK; NOT AS PLEASING MEN, BUT GOD, WHICH TRIETH OUR HEARTS. I THESSALONIANS 2:4

Our Ministry...



at a glance



Camping in the Carpathians

Carpathian Mountain Outreach

CMO 2009 has come to a close, and we are excited about the things that were accomplished. This year's project lasted nine weeks, during which time the CMO team distributed about 42,000 pieces of Bible literature in 21 villages and towns, and showed the movie *Fireproof* in 11 villages. New students are still sending in their enrollment forms for our Chronological Bible Course as a result of these efforts. Details for the 2010 CMO project will be posted to the ETO web site in the coming weeks. We appreciate your prayers for our ongoing efforts to reach the people of Ukraine's Carpathian Mountains. www.euroteamoutreach.org/cmo



Nathan and Katelin Day

Congratulations, Mr. and Mrs. Nathan Day!

On November 7 of this year, our good friends Nathan Day and Katelin Rebsch were married! Needless to say, we are very excited to be welcoming our third official family into ETO. The Day's will be traveling to L'viv in early January to begin their new life together. They'll actually be living in our apartment for a few months while they set up their own housing arrangements. Please pray for them, their housing, their ministry, and especially the wonderful marriage that God has orchestrated for them. You can learn more at www.mywedding.com/natelin.



Our development team works on writing Lesson 14.

Chronological Bible Course

With over 400 students enrolled in our correspondence course, we are busier than ever! Our fifteenth lesson is nearly complete, taking students up through the life of Isaac. Lessons 16 & 17, the last of Phase 1 of the course, will close out the book of Genesis with the accounts of Jacob and Joseph. Although this first phase focuses on Genesis, the Gospel is presented very clearly using many Old Testament types of Christ. Phase 2 of our course will cover the Mosaic Law, God's covenant with Israel, and an overview of the prophets. This will then set the stage for Phase 3 of the course, The Life of Christ. Even while in the States, our family continues to be involved in the development of this course. Please pray that God would bless our efforts and those of everyone on our team as we move forward with this ministry.



Ministry DVD Now Available

Since arriving home in the US, one of the many projects we've been working on is an updated DVD presentation of our ministry. We are pleased to announce that this is now complete! The DVD lasts about 14 minutes, and provides a summary of our work in Ukraine, including new photos, never-before-seen CMO footage, and a sobering glimpse into Ukraine's tragic history. If you would like to receive a copy of this DVD, simply send us your name and US mailing address. We'd be happy to send you a copy free of charge. If you are interested in hosting our family at your church for a presentation of the ministry, please contact us immediately to schedule a date.

Send DVD requests to: **Joshua & Kelsie Steele, 211 Old Steele Creek Court, Azle, TX 76020**, OR via e-mail to: joshandkels@gmail.com.



We got a house!

Through a rather amazing set of circumstances, God has once again proven to our family that He indeed owns the cattle on a thousand hills. Only a few weeks ago, Kelsie and I were able to purchase our very first house in the US! (No, don't worry, we're not moving back to America.) For several years, we have been praying that God would allow us to buy a house in the United States. Living in a for-

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I MET THE “MARTIN LUTHER” OF THE CARPATHIANS
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He then surprised me further by saying, “That is the message I have been preaching to these people every Sunday.” I was shocked. Far from rejecting the Gospel of grace, here was a priest who actually seemed to be telling me that he was in agreement with it!

Our conversation that day was brief, and after we left I related what had happened to the rest of the team. We didn’t have any further contact with Father Stepan after that, but we wondered if perhaps he might know the Lord. His words certainly seemed to confirm that.

Last month, a full three years after our first visit to Khashchovanya, we again rolled into the village in Jessie’s yellow van. This year, we planned to show a new film in Khashchovanya: *Fireproof*. We asked around and soon found Father Stepan. I introduced myself again, and asked if he remembered me. “How could I forget a name like Joshua?” he asked warmly. (There is no equivalent for the name “Joshua” in Ukrainian.) We explained our desire to show *Fireproof*, and again were pleased to see that he was very open to the idea. We told him that we would be back in a couple of weeks to hang some posters. Then we wrote down his cell number, and headed to the next village on our list.

Once I again I found myself wondering if this man might be saved. I’ve always known that there are born-again Christians in the Catholic Church – maybe even priests – but I couldn’t say for certain that I had ever met one. Furthermore, I have seen over and over again how the Catholic system blinds people to the Gospel. Most of my interaction with Catholic priests in the Carpathians reminds me of Jesus’ sobering rebuke to the Pharisees in Matthew 23:13: “*But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.*” And yet, Father Stepan seemed to be cut from a different cloth. Still, I was hesitant to hope for too much since we had only chatted briefly on a couple of oc-

casions.

Soon the time came for our team to return to Khashchovanya and advertise the film. Jessie happened to be in Poland that day, so the rest of us went to the mountains by train. When we reached a city called Striy, only 30 minutes from the mountains, we got on a bus which would take us the rest of the way to Khashchovanya. To my surprise, after only a few stops, Father Stepan got on the bus also! He immediately recognized us, and took a seat next to me. At first I was a bit nervous, knowing that we still had at least two hours of travel time ahead of us. A lot can happen during a two-hour conversation. Little did I know that this conversation would turn out to be one of the most exciting I have ever had in the mountains of Western Ukraine.

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Bryan and Joshua hang a poster advertising an upcoming showing of *Fireproof*. (2009)



Preaching the Gospel in Khashchovanya after showing *Fireproof*. (2009)

I MET THE "MARTIN LUTHER" OF...
(continued from page 3)

We started off with simple questions. He asked about our work, how we are supported, what kinds of things we do in L'viv, etc. I asked about his family, and how long he had served in Khashchovanya. He showed me some family pictures on his cell phone, and I showed him pictures of Kelsie and the kids on my iPod. So far so good. Cautiously, I dropped a comment about how our ministry respects the Bible as God's Word and the final authority in every area of life. To my delight, he picked up on this, and began recounting his own studies. "Of course the Bible must be our final authority," he told me. "I studied in Catholic Seminary for five years, and I didn't learn that. I started reading the Bible on my own, and they almost kicked me out." I picked my jaw up off the floor and tried to organize my thoughts. Here was a priest who was telling me that he was nearly expelled from seminary because he studied the Bible! I was not shocked that the seminary would do such a thing, but rather that I was actually talking to a person from within the Catholic system who understood and openly acknowledged the foundational nature of Scripture!

It gets better. "You know," he continued, "the problem with people is that they all want to trust in their own works for salvation. But a man can only be justified by faith. I've been screaming

The Steele's in America?

Yes, that's right. As you have probably heard, our family is currently in the US. There are several reasons that we decided to make this trip, but one of the main ones has to do with immigration problems that have come up recently in Ukraine. (You can read about this situation in more detail on our web site: www.OFReport.com.) We will need to get new Ukrainian visas while we're here, and some of us also need new passports.

In addition, we decided to make this trip into sort of a "mini-furlough" - the first we have ever taken since going to the field over 8 years ago. We plan to remain in the US until May of 2010. Lord willing, this will provide the time we need to resolve our immigration difficulties, report to several supporting churches, and get some much needed rest before CMO takes off next year.

The ministry in Ukraine is continuing in our absence under the direction of Jessie Beal, assisted by his family, Bryan Shufelt, and



When we arrived in the US, God used another missionary family to bless us with a Toyota Camry free of charge!

Denise Hutchison. Nathan Day is currently in the US as well, and will be returning with his new bride Katelin on January 4, 2010. Even though our family is in America, we remain involved in several ministry-related tasks, including the continuing development of ETO's Chronological Bible Course.

Please remember our family in prayer during this time. While it's nice to be "home," it's hard to maintain one's life on both sides of the Atlantic at the same time. Trips to the US are always memorable, but the longer we stay, the more we look forward to our return to Ukraine and the ministry there.

that to my people for eight years now. Only the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ can save." That did it. My initial skepticism vanished, and the two of us started swapping favorite Scripture verses like old pals from Bible college. Until that day, I had NEVER talked to a priest who told me about man's need for imputed righteousness. "You know, Father Stepan, I think you have

a very unique position." I said. "There are people who will listen to you that would never pay any attention to me. It's like Paul said in that verse about trying to be all things to all men... ummm..." I couldn't think of how it went in Ukrainian. Father Stepan finished the verse for me from memory: "And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews;

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I MET THE "MARTIN LUTHER" OF...
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to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;"

Then we came to the subject of witnessing techniques. Father Stepan has a favorite approach. "The best way to witness to someone is to start out with a simple question," he explained. "When you die, are you going to heaven or hell? There are only two options." He went on to recount how most people think/hope they're going to heaven, but that they base this on their own good works instead of on the finished work of Christ. By now I was starting to suspect that Father Stepan had been listening to Ray Comfort! "The Catholic Church doesn't teach this message," he said sadly. "It's present in their doctrines, but they don't believe it. You think I learned these things in seminary? No. I learned them from protestant brothers and from reading the Bible." I would later learn that Father Stepan has been listening to radio broadcasts from preachers like Dr. J. Vernon McGee since the early 90's.

I wish I had a recording of our fellowship on that bus. I have given the highlights as best I remember them, but much more was said. In four years of ministering the Gospel in Carpathian mountain villages, I have never met anyone who knew the Gospel message like Father Stepan. A week later, our team returned to Khashchovanya. We showed the



Showing Fireproof in the village of Slavske with a Gospel message afterwards

film, and afterward I preached a short Gospel message. Once again, Father Stepan was there for the whole thing, and afterward, he invited us to his house. At one point during our conversation, he asked a favor of me: "Do you have access to the internet?" I acknowledged that I do. "If you could somehow get me recordings of J. Vernon McGee's sermons in Russian, that would be a great help to me." He then proceeded to show me a shelf in his living room, about three feet wide, which was crammed from one end to the other with small paperback notebooks. He opened one of these and I saw that it was completely filled with handwritten notes. "You see all these? These are my studies of the Bible and notes I have taken from listening to preachers on the radio."

Before we left Father Stepan's home that day, our whole team gathered with him and prayed

for the village of Khashchovanya. We prayed for God's blessing on him and his ministry, and that God would open the hearts of the people to the message of Christ. I would like to ask you to pray for Father Stepan as well. I am as certain of his salvation in Christ as I have ever been about anyone. There are times on the mission field when one begins to experience the Elijah syndrome: "I'm alone and no one else is following Christ." But that day on our bus ride to the Carpathian mountains, God showed me one of His own: a shining light in a remote village, a man of God, faithfully proclaiming salvation through Jesus Christ alone. And you can be certain that his job is not an easy one. At least our team has the means to travel to many villages, to print large amounts of literature, and to maintain direct contact with believers whom

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WE GOT A HOUSE!*(continued from page 2)*

mer Soviet republic, one never knows when the government might close the borders, making it impossible to remain in the country. For this reason, we felt that it would be prudent to have a place to go in the event that we ever have to leave the foreign field. In addition, the house could be rented out in our absence, providing some additional income to support our work in Ukraine. Now, God has answered that prayer and we find ourselves in the middle of a remodeling project!

Last week, Anthony Courter brought his family down from Tennessee (13 strong!) and along with other friends and family we began the project. In just one week, the team installed soffit board all the way around the eaves, closed in two skylights, prepped and painted the entire exterior, repaired drywall, fixed doors, and made major progress on painting the inside.

We'll be posting more info and pictures on our blog, but needless to say, we are eternally grateful to all those who have given of their time and resources to help us get this house in shape. We plan to move into the house for the remainder of our time in the States, then rent it out when we go back to Ukraine in the spring.

“And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

Matthew 25:40



The Courter family made short work of our remodeling project. Thanks guys for a job well done!

I MET THE “MARTIN LUTHER” OF...*(continued from page 5)*

we know and love. Father Stepan is holding the line in a very dark place. For eight years he has preached the Gospel to the people of that village, and he is preaching still. Please pray for him. Men like that are few and far between.

In closing, I want to say that my story above is not intended

answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbid him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part.”

I rejoice that I have an ally



The CMO team poses for a quick photo with Father Stepan and his son. (2009)

as a call to ecumenicism. This is not a story of an Evangelical and a Catholic who decided to shelve their doctrine so they could have a praise service in the same room. This is the story of a modern-day Martin Luther: a man to whom God has revealed Himself through the Scriptures. Yes, I'm sure that if I sat down with Father Stepan and compared doctrinal statements there would be differences – maybe big ones. But when I think of Father Stepan and his little church in the mountains, I am reminded of Jesus' dialogue with His disciples in Mark 9:38-40: “And John

in the Carpathians: a man who knows my Lord and preaches His Gospel. And I ask you again: when you pray for missionaries in Ukraine, remember to add one more to your list: pray for Brother Stepan.

Epilogue

In the days after this article was published online, we began receiving enthusiastic comments on our blog. Among these was a message from the very Russian preacher whom Father Stepan had listened to on the radio during the 90's. You can read the rest of the story on our blog:

www.ofreport.com/2009/06/fatherstepan

To God be the Glory

Joshua and Kelsie Steele are missionaries currently serving in Ukraine. To learn more, visit us on the web at www.OFReport.com.

Sending Church: Fairpark Baptist Church, 6000 Crowley Road, Fort Worth, TX 76134