

Parking on the Sidewalk... Walking in the Street

Monday, August 24, 2020

Returning Home

We're home! It's been a journey, in more ways than one, and I kept waiting to update until I "knew more." "Knowing more" seems to be somewhat elusive.... Here are some bullet points of the last 3 months:

- It was sad to leave Sofia! We will miss so many great people from the church, who have been a great community and a little taste of what heaven will be like, with people from all over the world! And we will miss our neighbors, who have shown us great kindness even with our almost non-existent language skills and rough start in the building (for those of you who remember us flooding the apartments below us to the basement because we didn't know we should turn our water off when we leave town - that was in the first 2 months we were there!)
- I will especially miss walking and getting around the city via various public transportation. I had actually hoped to spend some time out walking before we left and visiting some museums we hadn't been to. Unfortunately, a badly sprained ankle while visiting an old mountaintop fortress changed those plans and I spent 2 weeks laying around and on crutches before I started very limited hobbling about. Paul also experienced some ankle issues with a return of the tendonitis he experienced early in our time in Bulgaria. We're both better, but still not fully recovered.
- Covid-19 cases continue to increase in Bulgaria, although the situation is not nearly as bad as in the US. Most stores and restaurants (that survived economically) are back open with requirements for masks indoors and especially on public transportation.
- IBC Sofia continues to meet on Zoom but, for the last 8 weeks or so, we have also been able to have a limited number of people meet in person wearing masks and social distancing. People sign up ahead of time to reserve a spot and 15 is the max we can do in our space. It's been great for some, especially for singles and extroverts, who don't have much social contact otherwise or just really miss being around people.
- With our plans to leave Bulgaria, the search for a new pastor has been ongoing. Paul has played a role in facilitating meetings with a very diverse group (ethnically, culturally and theologically) from the church who are the search committee. We had hoped to find someone from within the EU, since people from most other countries (and especially the US) are currently restricted from entering Bulgaria (unless you are a citizen or current long term resident.)
- Without a new pastor in place, Paul officially remains the pastor due to legalities of how churches function in Bulgaria. This means that he (likely we) will return to deal with some ongoing issues. Since we have residency into Feb. next year, a trip back will likely take place prior to that.

- We originally set a return date of July 30th which changed to Aug 6th and then to Aug 14th, due to various issues with flights and shipping. It almost changed again a couple of days before departure, but we were able to work out the glitches and start the long trip back via Amsterdam and JFK. Overall, things went smoothly except for Kathy's briefly lost passport and boarding pass in Amsterdam and arrival amidst tornado warnings and torrential rain in Minneapolis. Sarah did a great job welcoming us home and setting us up with the basics in the first floor of her duplex! Of course, we now begin the task of resettling with our stored household goods (and shipping, when it arrives 😊)....after we finish our mandatory 2 week quarantine.

- We look forward to seeing many of you in person at some point as we transition to life in MN!

Blessings! Kathy