

The Leach Family

Missionaries in Bulgaria

Dear Brethren,

August 28, 2022

My last prayer letter, and especially my last email update, came from a very discouraged missionary. I had a lot of questions, a ton of concerns, very little direction, an excess of bills, and lower monthly support. And all of that on top of the daily battle that is OCD, which severely affects my routines. I recall back in May standing before a precious congregation in rural Michigan and saying, "If God doesn't do something, I'm done. I can't continue on the field like this." From the back pew a man called out, "We will pray you through it!" Shortly afterward I received a call from a deacon in Southeast Tennessee telling me that the church wanted to know how they could help, and that no matter how long this valley lasted they were with me because, as he put it, "We don't believe in kicking our soldiers when they're down."

One individual after another - one pastor after another - one church after another encouragement came slowly, but surely, through God's people. My medical bills, which had drained my reserves, were taken care of by generous gifts. A Pastor called and asked me to come so his church could be a blessing to us. Another Pastor called and asked me to come, simply with the intention of praying over me. Weekends spent in Kentucky, West Virginia, North Carolina... moments around a preacher's table or at a restaurant with a pastor and his family... God's people listened. They didn't offer endless advice; they listened. One dear lady held my wife's hand across the table and cried with her. These small moments wrought a big work in our hearts.

God, as He is faithful to do, worked on our hearts. Some time in July it occurred to me that I probably would not find any answers medically/supplementally/nutritionally, and that I will likely battle OCD for the remainder of my life. I don't have to tell you how discouraging this thought was, but a day or so afterward a sister at a supporting church just this side of the North Carolina line shook my hand and said, "I hope this isn't out of line, but I feel the need to tell you that a broken vessel lets the light out better than a whole one." So I came to America seeking, with questions about how to be victorious over OCD, but instead came away with the answer that this thorn in the flesh, though it will remain, will be the very thing that will help me minister.

I came with many questions, but am either getting the answers I didn't ask for... or getting answers to questions I never asked.

Which brings me to the next part - God is leading us to expand the Coat Closet in Avren to a year-round clothing distribution. That thought never entered my mind, and wasn't part of the questions I was seeking answers for, but Carrie and I both are excited about this expansion. The need is there, and we already know distributors. I already know Pastor Ismail will be excited to help the kids in his impoverished neighborhood. It will be a lot of work to get up and running, but churches are already asking how they can help. As of right now we plan to return to Bulgaria September 14th, and we will have a lot of work to do right away. First to take our house back from potential mildew and rat squatters. I will also have to tend to our vehicle situation, since my wife's car was hit while in its parking space outside of our front gate. But it will also be time to reach out to coat distributors for our yearly coats and socks distribution. I hope to begin the closet expansion after the Coats for Kids distribution. Pray with us.

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One more random story and I'll try to close: A few weeks ago when in prayer I told the Lord I'd sure like to have my teeth cleaned. I know that sounds like such a small thing, but I don't like going to the dentist in Bulgaria. OCD and Bulgarian dentists don't mix well. Also, American dentists are expensive and usually booked up for months out. But I told the Lord I'd really like to have my teeth cleaned. Carrie called several places and not only were no appointments available any time before November, it would cost nearly \$400 (because as a new patient it would also require x-rays and exam). Let's back up just a bit... Cherith called us from Michigan with severe tooth pain a couple months ago. We went and got her and took her to her dentist here in Bristol, TN and she underwent an urgent root canal. After the root canal there was a scratchy piece on a tooth behind it, but she said she wanted to wait and see if it smoothed out. Now fast forward to that day I talked to the Lord about my teeth. Cherith asked to go back to the dentist to have him look at that scratchy spot. We went in the office and they scheduled her for the next day. I decided to ask if they had any openings for cleanings. The receptionist said they had two cancellations for the following day and they could get me in. Carrie, too. I took those two appointments. Just then a dear old friend came out from the back. She's a dental hygienist we met years ago. Come to find out, we were scheduled to see her. She texted Carrie later and said she spoke to the dentist and the cleaning and x-rays would be free, and that we only needed to pay for the exam. So we got our teeth examined and cleaned and talked about the Lord the whole time during our appointments. Afterward we got a call from the pastor of our dear friend, inviting me to speak at their church. We went and enjoyed time with them, and the church chose to begin supporting us and also one of our fellow missionaries. Every morning I wake up and thank God for not only removing this dental burden from my shoulders, but also using something so trivial to me to connect us with a precious church in Virginia. God's ways are amazing to watch.

We're at the hardest part of furlough: the goodbyes stage. Saying goodbye is such a common thing for a missionary, but we never get used to it. It seems it gets harder and harder every time, especially with grandchildren in the picture now. But God knows, and He will provide grace. Goodbye Grace. We try not to dwell there, instead trying to focus on the great times we've had here. The powerful church meetings. The echoes of the Prayer Room. Spending a little time with all of our children. Watching our grandbabies crawl. Laughing with friends - and sometimes belly laughing. Speaking English. Eating steak. Watching baseball. Experiencing heart healing in the church. Being reminded time and time again we are not alone in this war.

We need your continued prayers. As the man yelled out in Michigan, keep praying us through it all. The only way anything is going to get done is by prayer, I firmly believe it. Thank you all... for everything.

Because He First Loved Me,

Missionary Larry Leach, Jr.