

Following is an email from Mike and Jackie:

A few nights ago, I lay in bed unable to get warm. Our apartment, like most here, does not have central heating so we rely on electric heaters to warm a room. At times I wish I could attach ours around my waist so it would follow me every where I go. Instead we just try to stay in one room as long as possible. Each night before we get ready for bed, we roll the heater into our bedroom so by the time we get in the covers it's at least above 60 degrees. While we can't complain about our "cold nights" after hearing about the cold snaps that have smothered the Midwestern States, the thirties combined with our rainy winter season make you chilled to the bone.

It turns out that night that I couldn't shake the cold because we had forgotten to turn the heater on after moving it. I realized how thankful I was for that little heater when at one time I had been skeptical of its abilities. A lack of central heating and insulation is a characteristic of the bay area we call home. Since our main role right now is as a culture and language learner, I thought about it this truth for awhile that night. I realized that this cultural lesson parallels something else we're learning.

Many Montenegrins are Serbian Orthodox and usually because their parents were because their parents were. They have a deeply religious history and culture which is mixing, sometimes clashing, with a more modern attitude of trusting no one but yourself. This collision is evident throughout the bay area. Orthodox churches dot the landscape but its parishioners are more often tour groups than men or women coming to worship. People flock to the cemetery to honor and respect the departed armed with flowers and candles but also an unshakeable fear of what really happens in life after death. Young people pull on their designer boots spotted in the ever-changing, fad-controlled window of the ritzy boutique downtown and yet never take off the bracelet with 33 beads that signifies the years Christ spent on this earth. Many families celebrate their "Slava Dan" or Saint Day, possibly the only time all year they see their priest or request a blessing on their family. Montenegrins know that God exists and there are pieces of Him scattered throughout their daily lives but yet they miss the total makeover that happens when you give your whole life to Christ. That is characterized by complete joy and life without reason to fear. Yet most choose to keep only small parts of their life connected to God, like celebrating a Slava Dan, probably hoping in some way to have joy and peace without being completely connected to the source.

We're praying that the Montenegrins would open up to Christ in every aspect of their life. That instead of using God as a space heater, they would feel the all-encompassing warmth of central heating – life in Christ.

If you'd like here are some more specific ways you can pray for the people we encounter on a daily basis.

Pray for the group meeting in Kotor. Pray that they would hear something from the Bible every week and learn what it means to be the body of Christ, the church. Pray for Mimi who is currently pastoring the church. Ask God to guide him and to help him to grow in his role as preacher, pastor, and teacher.

Pray for the English speaking Bible study we started in Herceg Novi. Pray that Zana and Dragica would continue to come but pray that God would use this to bring more to Him.

Pray for the few in Herceg Novi that have made the decision to be Christ followers. Pray that they will grow in their faith and that God will use us and our team to help however He leads. Pray for Zana, Dragica, Danjiela, Stanisa, Bolsiljka, Tanya, Goran, and Keka.

Finally pray for those that we are building relationships with that haven't yet realized what joy Christ can bring and more importantly the assurance of eternity in heaven. Pray for our language

tutor, Blazenka and her family. Pray for our 25 English students this semester. Pray for the relationships Mike is building with the students coming to English Club. And pray for our landlords, Bato and Mila, that they might see Christ in us.

We feel blessed to be able to share with you firsthand what God is doing in Montenegro. Thanks for enabling us to be here through your support in prayer.

M&J