

Step Into the Water Tour

06-28-07 by Laura Bohanan; Updated 07-10-07

As Mark and I were preparing to start our two month long tour around America before our move to Ukraine, we were drawn to a Scripture in Joshua. Joshua 3 talks about the Israelites coming to the river Jordon. When they arrived God told them to have the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant to step into the water and He would stop the water's flow so they could cross on dry ground. We noticed that God told them to step into the water and *then* He would work. Many times we stand on the river banks of our lives waiting for God to work and lead us and often wondering 'if' He'll call us to work. What God is really waiting for is for us to trust Him and take a step of faith. We must act in obedience by stepping out, which shows our faith and trust in Him. Many places in the Scripture we are told if we do *this* then God will do *this*. As Mark and I take a step of faith and start our tour, not knowing how or when God will work to provide our financial support, we are assured that God is going to work in His perfect timing. There is a beautiful song by the Cathedrals quartet that says "Step into the water, wade out just a little deeper. . . ." Please pray for us as we wade out a little deeper.

Well we've been on the road for over a month now ! What a time we've been having, seeing family and friends, making new friends, and sharing about what God is calling us to do in Ukraine. Here are just a few highlights of where we've been so far and what's been happening:

SIGNAL HEIGHTS BAPTIST CHURCH - May 20th was our departure date, but not after we spoke at the Signal Heights Baptist Church, Sacramento, California, where our friend Jeff Coburn is Pastor. His wife Lori is a good friend of mine and we've spoken at Several Healing of a Woman's Heart conferences together. Jeff lead the children's time and talked about God working all over the world. He drew the children's attention to a world map where he brought their focus slowly down to the country of Ukraine. At the end of the Children's time, they and Jeff circled around us and prayed for us. We shared our testimonies and calling during the main message and then spoke with many from the church at our display table afterwards. After eating lunch with Jeff and Lori we headed out to see a few last friends before we visited and spoke that evening.

CORNERSTONE SLAVIC BAPTIST CHURCH - Sunday night, May 20th, we visited our home Slavic church in Sacramento, the Cornerstone Slavic Baptist Church. Mark and I have been attending here for sometime on Sunday evenings in order to improve our understanding and use of the Russian language. A large majority of the members are from Ukraine with over 50% of them being from the Vinnitsa area where we are going. After the traditional three (3) sermons, we were asked to share at the end of the service. As I looked out into the congregation and saw many of friends and acquaintances looking back, seeming to hang on our every word and I was struck with an awesome sense of humility, honor and duty. It hit home even harder that we are going to *their home* to share the hope of the Gospel. We were received with great love and support on our first

visit there and this day was no difference. They gave from their heart and pledge continuous prayer support from us and gave abundantly from their finances too.

We left Cornerstone around 9 pm and headed back to our house one last time to load up our vehicle and finish packing a few things. We hit the road at midnight on May 20th for the Step Into the Water Tour !

ARIZONA - Our first big stop was Phoenix Arizona on Wednesday May 23, 2007. Laura conducted two (2) last audits for her job on the way out of town in Visalia and Calipatria California. In Phoenix we stayed with one of my work friends (John F.) for the night and had a great home cooked meal ! On the way out of town we visited the Phoenix CCM Office where I submitted my last work reports.

NEW MEXICO - On the way to New Mexico, we made a short one hour stop in Roswell, where I attended the [New Mexico Military Institute](#) . It was great to relive some old memories and see how the school had grown. Our final destination in New Mexico was the small mountain top town of Cloudcroft, New Mexico for a few days. My sister Brenda and her family moved there over a year ago. On Sunday we spoke briefly at both services of the First Baptist Church of Cloudcroft. The church had a wonderful patriotic service for Memorial Day that included the famous [Veteran's Poppies](#) . Having been in the military, I really appreciated the honor given to those who lost their lives to keep us free, to be thanked for my service, and to pray for those serving on domestic and foreign soil today. We look forward to returning to visit Cloudcroft and the church in future trips.

ARKANSAS - Looking for a mid-way stop between New Mexico and Missouri, we stopped in Fayetteville Arkansas, where I have family. We stayed with my Uncle Keith and Aunt Ann (My mother's sister) for two days to rest and enjoy seeing family I hadn't seen in years. Fayetteville is where I was born and where I lived for a few years while my father was in Vietnam. It was nice to visit familiar spots and enjoy the beauty of the area.

MISSOURI - Thursday, May 31, 2007, found us in Poplar Bluff, Missouri (southeast corner of Mo.), where the Rev Greg & Pam Kirk now live. Mark worked with Greg for numerous years at the Sacramento Union Gospel Mission and Greg and Pam were in our wedding. Greg is now the Director of the [United Rescue Mission in Poplar Bluff](#) . We arrived just in time to help them move from a rental house to their new home. . . . and you know us, we jumped right in to help pack, move, put together furniture, put in shelving paper, etc..... Mark taught the morning Bible Study down at the Mission on Friday, June 1st.

ALABAMA - On Mark's birthday, Saturday June 2d, we had a long drive from Missouri to Mobile, Alabama. This stop was to visit Ed and Anne Adams, who were also in our wedding. They also came back out to Sacramento for Mark's ordination in January 2007. Ed and Anne were gracious in giving us a wonderful tour of the area which is rich in history. On Sunday we spoke to Ed's Sunday School Class at [Moffett Road Baptist Church](#) , who pledged to faithfully pray for us. We attended the morning service and

were extremely blessed by the Pastor's message and to watch the church commission a few short term missionaries. We made some wonderful connections there and hope to visit again during our next trip. On Wednesday we took a day of rest from all the travel and went fishing with Ed and his brother Donnie. What a day and boy do we have a fish story to tell !

FLORIDA - Thursday, June 7th, found us on the road again to Tallahassee Florida where my youngest sister, Shana, and her family live. Shana's husband is a Music Pastor at the [Element 3 Church](#) there. We attended services with them, met a number of their friends, and heard a great sermon on revenge.

TEXAS - Helping my sister Shana drive, we all (except Eric who had to work) headed back west to Arlington, Texas, for a family reunion. It's been a number of years since we've all gotten together and our leaving the country was a good catalyst to make it happen again. There was lots of noise and excitement with 11 of the 14 grandchildren my parents have there. Unfortunately our three children were the 3 missing grandchildren, and their three (3) children (great grandchildren). We threw a 'surprise' 45th Anniversary for our parents and for the first time in our lives I believe my sisters and I actually surprised our mother - you see nothing gets past her ! We stayed until Father's Day, when Mark and I got to attend early service with my father, the first time in over 20 years . . . right after service we were back on the road to Florida.

FLORIDA - We returned to Tallahassee for two days, again staying with Shana and her family. We had a great dinner Tuesday night (June 19th) with Element 3 Church Senior Pastor Mark McNee. We also helped Shana pack a little as they were preparing to move in a week to a new apartment.

NORTH CAROLINA - On Wednesday, June 20th, we headed up to Raleigh, North Carolina, to visit one of Laura's work friends (Chris Z) and to rest before heading on up to the Washington DC area. Chris was kind enough to give us a tour of his church, [Trinity Life Baptist Church](#), where he is a Deacon. What a beautiful church ! They are on fire for 'missions' and are growing so fast they had to add additional building space a couple of years ago. We met a number of ladies in the office and a few volunteers throughout the church during the tour. One of the ladies in the office was getting ready to take a mission trip to Kiev, Ukraine with [Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of NC](#). How exciting to know that others have a heart for Ukraine ! We also visited the CCM Office where Chris works.

VIRGINIA -

Our first stop in Virginia was in Spotsylvania where my friend Jean Miller lives. She was a special guest speaker at the last two (2) Healing of a Woman's Heart's conferences in Northern California. We stayed with Assoc Pastor Mike & Barbara Raphael at their peaceful country home. We were kept quite busy there but enjoyed every minute of it ! Saturday morning I attended a ladies meeting with Jean & Barbara aimed at setting up a conference in the Spotsylvania area similar to the California Healing of a Woman's Heart

Conferences, while Mark and Mike visited the US Marine Corp Museum. Saturday evening we joined the 50 Plus group at the Traveler's Rest Baptists Church in Snail, Virginia, where Jean and the Rapael's attend. There was great food and great company along with hearing a Bell Ringers group from an Assisted Living Group Home. What joy was on their faces as they rang their bells ! They did an awesome job and one young man did the best impression of Tennessee Ernie Ford singing 16 Tons we have ever heard ! Sunday morning found us back at Traveler's Rest Baptist Church where we joined the Adult Bible Class and were touched by the lesson on Habbakuk. We spoke during the main service and I have to tell you that this has got to be the sweetest spirited church I have ever visited in my life. We immediately felt like part of the family and were embraced without reservations. They encouraged us in so many ways and even though it was a short visit they are already near and dear to our hearts.

Our next stop was in the small town of Moseley, VA, just southwest of Richmond, Virginia. My sister Shana's in-laws were kind enough to let us housesit and enjoy four days of real rest since hitting the road 35 days ago. We took the time to catch up on sleep and visited a local theme park for some great rollercoaster rides and musical shows. We also got to visit the [Fort Harrison Battlefield](#) park as well as the [Richmond Metro Zoo](#) .

Friday, June 29, 2007, we headed up to [Washington DC](#) to walk around the museums and memorials. We started at the Jefferson Memorial, then visited the Holocaust Museum for three (3) hours (still not enough time), then walked through the Lincoln, Washington, World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, Vietnam War Women's, Washington DC World War I and other memorials along Capital Mall.

After walking around until about 7:30 pm (over 6 miles of walking and standing) we headed to Fredricksburg, Virginia, where one of Laura's x-coworkers James and his family lived. Laura and James have known each other for a number of years and are part of an informal Christian group, on occasion they met at training and enjoyed great times of fellowship and prayer, along with other Christians. James and his family were great hosts and took us on a tour of [historic Fredricksburg](#) where we saw cannon balls still embedded in the sides of buildings from the Civil War. We also visited [Chatham House](#) and the [Battle of Fredricksburg \(Marey's Heights\)](#). Sunday, July 1, 2007, found us speaking at the young church -New Life (Independant Fundatmental) Baptist Church. We started with time during the Youth Bible Class where we discussed how Satan tries to eat up all the good things in our lives and how often we focus a lot of attention on things other than God, cheating Him of our time, especially in the area of interactions with the opposite sex and the 'search' for a spouse. During the main service we were given the opportunity to share our salvation testimonies, our calling to go to Ukraine, and a few stories from our previous trips. We were so encouraged by this little church and it's heart for missions. . . . currently they support ten (10) missionaries !

MISSOURI -

Tuesday July 3, 2007, found us back in Poplar Bluff, Missouri with Rev Greg & Pam Kirk. We had a great visit, ate some wonderful smoked meat Greg cooked and played a

new card game - Skipbo. The next morning we all drove west and stopped at a small town restaurant for breakfast. Afterwards we went to the natural Springs about 1 1/2 hours west of Poplar Bluff. They were gorgeous and it was incredibly peaceful there. We ran into a couple from the [Christian Motorcycle Association](#) and fellowshipped for over an hour ! I love those 'divine appointments' that God puts in our path.

After visiting the springs, we split up from the Kirks and headed to our next stop. Here's another example of God's blessings, due to the 'uniquely' laid out freeways in Missouri there is no easy way to get from Poplar Bluff to Kansas City, and the trip was going to be quite long. We looked for a stopping point in between and lo and behold there was Branson Missouri ! During our stay there we attended [Branson's 1st Show - The Baldknobbers](#) which was a hilariously clean and family friendly show filled with comics and music, and a strong patriotic theme (great for 4th of July). It was raining extremely heavy after the show so there were no fireworks, however, about 11:30 pm we heard and then watched from our hotel room a fireworks display that finally 'tried' but it didn't have much 'wow' factor due to the continuing rain.

July 5th found us on the road to Kansas City, Missouri/Kansas, where we were to have dinner with another one of Laura's x-coworkers Frank and his wife Judy. Unfortunately Frank had to suddenly leave town that night (his mother with cancer had taken a turn for the worse; NOTE: Please keep Frank and his family in prayer.), so we ate pizza in our hotel room and watched a movie. The next morning we visited the national office of the [Association of Rescue Gospel Missions](#) where during a tour we got to meet several great people/contacts and received an abundance of information. After the tour we were on the road again headed towards South Dakota.

SOUTH DAKOTA -

In Sioux Falls South Dakota, we spent time with Laura's sister Karla and her family. Saturday we got to participate in a surprise birthday party for Karla with her friends, husband & kids. She was definitely surprised and we got to meet some really neat people. Sunday we attended a multi-church service in the park followed by a picnic. Karla introduced us to a number of her friends, from her church, [First Assemblies of God Sioux Falls](#) , and we were able to share about our work. Several of the people prayed for us right then and there and a number of others slipped our information packet into their Bibles so they could include us in their personal prayer times. Monday we visited an older couple in a small town just outside of Sioux Falls and we had a wonderful time of fellowship and prayer. Tuesday we took Karla's older sons to the [Sioux Falls Rescue Gospel Mission](#) for a tour and then watched all the kids while Karla & her husband attended a County Commissioners meeting that was discussing the opening of an 'Adult' store in the area. After lunch with new friends and Karla & her husband, we hit the road again.

And here goes God again ! We needed a midway stop between Sioux Falls SD and Colorado Springs CO and there lies [Mount Rushmore National Memorial](#) ! After some good rest and an hour or so walking around the memorial, we were off for Colorado.

COLORADO -

We stayed with my Aunt & Uncle in Colorado Springs. The first full day there we traveled down to Florence Colorado where we took a tour of the USP Admax Florence. I had worked with a number of people there remotely on a large case and it was great to finally put a face to the name and voice. This was Mark's first tour inside a Federal Bureau of Prisons facility. The institution Chaplain went along on the tour and answered a number of our questions. Before heading out of Florence, we stopped and talked with Kateria who founded the [Desert Waters Correctional Outreach](#). It is a wonderful ministry that reaches out to workers in the state and federal correctional facilities nation wide. We had a great time of fellowship and then deep prayer. We thank God for placing such strong and dedicated Christians in our path with whom we may share our joys and troubles and then go to the Lord in prayer with.

Unfortunately my Aunt was sent out of country by her work and was not able to finalize plans for us to speak at a church in the Colorado Springs area. But we know that God has a plan in everything that happens. We attended the remote site of their church (it's huge & and is where lots of Focus on the Family staff attend) and heard a wonderful message that really uplifted us. Monday my Aunt & Uncle invited a number of couples over for a Bar-B-Que. A number of them were very mission minded, and one couple was actually missionaries in Kazakhstan. We got to watch a DVD of their work there. On the DVD was also a few pictures of a trip they took to Ukraine. It was really great to spend time talking with them as they shared some experiences of their initial days in the field. We also got to talk with a number of other couples, of which was a couple that had spent many years in the mission field as printers. They had been in several countries to include Germany and China. They were a great encouragement to us as well.

NEVADA - Our trip from Colorado to California was over 1,100 miles so we decided to stop in Nevada for a night. The small town we expected to stop at after 10 hours of driving was jam packed with cars and hundreds of semi-trucks. There were a number of fires along the freeway and it had been closed. The ONLY hotel was of course filled to capacity. Mark talked to a State Trooper and confirm directions on our map that would take us south and then west around five (5) of the fires. We jumped back in the car after filling up the car with gas and headed off down a small highway. It took us another 5 1/2 hours to reach a town just south of Reno where there was a hotel we could stop at. We were extremely tired and so glad to be stopping. The long drive that day made the next days drive down the hill into Sacramento a breeze though.

CALIFORNIA - We ended our trip right where we started, back in Sacramento California. We got in mid day Wednesday July 18, 2007, and decided to surprise the Wednesday night Prayer Group by attending. It sure was great to see familiar faces. Sunday we attended our church, [El Camino Baptist Church](#) where the service highlighted our departure for Ukraine. We were excited to see many of our friends from other churches, some of Laura's ESL students, and long time friends. Afterwards was a wonderful potluck where we got to mingle and catch up.

Thank you to the many of you who housed us, fed us, arranged for us to speak, and most importantly prayed for us. We met many new friends and made a number of connections that will benefit our ministry. We look forward to our next tour around the USA and all the excitement it will bring !