



Lea and Petra Williams

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Location: Czech Republic



What we do: Leading the Anglican congregation in Brno and developing a vibrant Christian community where people can meet Jesus and grow as disciples.



Discovering creative ways to share the hope of Jesus with people unconnected to church

Dear friends,

"The trees are full of modern-day Zacchaeuses." Czech priest Tomáš Halík uses this image to describe the spiritual landscape here. After years of faith being sidelined, many are not openly rejecting God; rather, they watch from a distance, curious yet cautious. Halík reminds us that Zacchaeus didn't climb the tree because he had repented or committed, but because he wanted to see. Transformation began when Jesus invited himself to Zacchaeus's house. Curiosity became encounter; distance gave way to relationship.

That picture of Zacchaeus resonates with what we see in Brno and seems to reflect a wider trend. We've read of a "quiet revival" in the UK and noticed reports of record numbers of downloads of the YouVersion Bible app. Many are turning to the online world and podcasts to explore questions of faith, and it feels as though that same stirring is being expressed locally. After years with church life pushed to the margins, people are not so much hostile as hesitant – watching from a safe distance, yet drawn by a restless curiosity. In recent months, that curiosity has surfaced in some rather unexpected ways.

One young man in his twenties arrived at church for the first time and shared that he had been reading the Bible on his own for six months, starting from Genesis. He had begun to pray each day and spoke of experiencing the Holy Spirit. For him, stepping into church was simply "the next step". When he returned the next week, he didn't come alone; he brought two colleagues, inviting them to come and see for themselves.

Another man, in his early 30s, arrived a couple of months ago and quietly told Lea before the service, "This is my last chance with church". He hadn't attended in years after painful teenage experiences and assumed he would die an atheist, yet something in him was still searching. Since that first Sunday, he hasn't missed a week and is now preparing for baptism. **Please pray for these men, and others like them: that they may feel safe to ask their questions, and that their quiet curiosity will grow into confident faith.**

Though their stories are very different, both men were perched in the "tree" of curiosity until Christ's call reached them, sometimes through Scripture, sometimes through friendship. We were simply the house ready to receive them. It reminds us that our task is not to shake people from the trees, but to keep the house open, the table set, and the welcome warm for when Christ brings them down.

Sometimes curiosity begins with an invitation. The start of the academic year is key for the student ministry Lea is part of, UKH. For Freshers' Week, we hosted a welcome barbecue in a local park. Around 40 students



Kicking off the new term at the
UKH welcome barbecue

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**With Jesus
With each other
To the edges**



attended, and though there was a brief talk, the real connections formed in conversations that followed. Even as the night turned cold, groups stayed behind, chatting for hours. Lea talked with a couple of lads with no Christian background who were there simply because a friend invited them.

This is why investing in student leaders is vital. In September, we ran a training weekend for our UKH leaders, equipping them, in turn, to equip their peers to open their Bibles and share their lives. Lea also hosted a roundtable for Brno pastors with Howard Spencer to explore how churches can better support this student ministry. Our hope is that investing in these students will help small,

welcoming communities emerge in halls across the city. **Please pray for the new academic year at UKH, for weekly Bible studies, public lectures and evangelistic events.**

This desire to be a welcoming house also shapes the church we are building. We often picture it as a harbour in a transient city, blessed by newcomers this year. This growth has brought challenges. Our current space, a small chapel, is now too small, limiting room for conversation and our children's work. For months, we searched for a new building to no avail. However, just this week, a wonderful opportunity has arisen. We have received a potential offer of the entire floor of a building in the city centre, a space we could transform into a new home for our community. **Please join us in thanking God for this exciting answer to prayer, and pray for wisdom and favour as we take the next steps.**

This principle of welcome is expressed in Petra's work at Vesna, the community centre for Ukrainian refugees. While the war is no longer headline news, people continue to arrive, and demand for Vesna's services remains high. Much of it is slow, unseen work: ensuring people have basic necessities to live, skills to thrive here, and helping them enter the workplace and work through the deep emotional trauma of displacement. This isn't a quick fix; it's patient listening, week after week. In September, Petra coordinated a project with local companies, equipping 220 disadvantaged children for the new school year. **Please pray for Petra and her colleagues at Vesna for strength and perseverance.**

This work is set against a backdrop of national uncertainty. October brings parliamentary elections, with the main opposition party expected to win. There's concern about support for people from Ukraine and a potential political shift east. We are already seeing public discourse become more divisive. **Please join us in prayer for the nation, especially for a gracious and truthful public conversation.**

At home, after a grateful summer road trip to Croatia, our lively puppy, Bo, has started training and is teaching us patience with every chewed-up shoe! The return to school brings its own focus: it's an important year for Olivia (15), now in her final year of primary school and preparing for national exams. We are also exploring next steps for Ted, who has struggled since his school discontinued its English provision. **Please pray for Olivia as she studies, and for wisdom for us all as we discern the best path for their education.**

God is stirring a quiet curiosity in many hearts. We are mindful that the trees remain full; many are still watching, still searching. Our calling is to be patient, present, and to keep our doors open for when people are ready to climb down and draw near. Thank you for your prayers, which enable us to be that community of warm and steady welcome.

With love and gratitude, Lea and Petra



Photos from top to bottom: A handful of our brilliant student leaders at our UKH training weekend in September; part of the Vesna project which equipped 220 children for the new school year; thankful for our church family and the exciting news of a potential new home; the family at our village's "hody" (feast day celebration) earlier in the year



Discovering creative ways to share the hope of Jesus

It's so encouraging to hear news from other CMS partners sharing the hope of Jesus with people not yet connected to churches. In the UK, CMS's Pioneer Mission Training programme is equipping people to respond creatively to the Holy Spirit beyond the boundaries of traditional church. Read more and get inspired by other stories of hope at churchmissionsociety.org/bringhope

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