



Lea and Petra Williams

Link Letter no. 11 | April 2026

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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,

Is something stirring? Bible sales in the US and UK have hit record highs. A conversation this week with one of our supporting church leaders got us asking: is some kind of revival going on here? In Britain, people drifted from faith gradually, but they absorbed the stories along the way, through school assemblies, harvest festivals, carols on the television. In the Czech Republic, as the sociologist Zdeněk Nešpor has shown, it was different. Faith wasn't slowly forgotten. It was repeatedly and deliberately suppressed, from the Counter-Reformation through to communism, and the chain of religious memory was broken. Many young Czechs have little or no understanding of the Christian story. When curiosity stirs, it tends to flow toward alternative spiritualities rather than the Christian faith. They need someone to hand them the Christian story.

That is exactly what happened before Christmas. Thirty-five students from UKH, the student ministry Lea is part of, stationed themselves in faculty foyers across Brno to give out gingerbread, each piece accompanied by a verse of Scripture, and to spark conversations about the Christmas story. For those wanting to know more, we prepared packs containing a gospel tract, Christmas tea and more gingerbread. We gave out 70 packs on the first day alone and had to hold an emergency baking session mid-week. Several students who we met during the outreach joined our Bible studies in the weeks that followed. Recently, we welcomed more new Czech and Slovak students to the group. We hope and pray that something is quietly growing. **Please pray for these students as they explore faith for the first time.**

This Easter, building on the Christmas experience, our student teams will be back at faculties across the city, inviting people to work through the Easter story using images and questions. We will have plenty of eggs and gospel tracts. **Please pray for the Easter outreach: for courage and for real encounters.**

December was full. We formed a community choir for the season, held carol services and filled a pub singing carols. Czech Television's Křesťanský magazín (the nearest equivalent to Songs of Praise) filmed one of our services. The director has asked to return later this year for a full episode on our family and ministry. Our final services before Christmas were held by candlelight due to electrical problems. Newcomers could have been forgiven for thinking they'd walked into an Orthodox church.

We are thankful to see people growing in faith: those recently baptised, those preparing for baptism and



Preparing and giving out gingerbread with verses of Scripture during the UKH Christmas outreach

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



those stepping into new roles and growing in their gifts. **Please pray for the continued deepening of our community.**

Brno is a transient city and our church reflects that. This year we have welcomed new people and said goodbye to others, some of them key members of the community. It is the rhythm of an international church: people arrive, put down roots for a season and move on, with our blessing.

After months of searching and prayer, the church council has made a decision about a new worship space. We are not yet able to share details, but things are moving forward. In April, a young American musician joins us to explore whether God might be calling him to serve in Brno. **Please pray for wisdom and favour as we take the next steps.**

February marked four years since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Petra continues to manage the Šatník at Vesna, a distribution centre supplying clothing, toiletries and household essentials to those in need. But the work has shifted from emergency response to the slower, harder task of integration. Petra has facilitated a project funded by the British Embassy to empower Ukrainian women to enter the workplace. Recently, 58 people practised job interviews with a leading technology company at Vesna, while others learned how to apply for social housing. Czechs and Ukrainians sat side by side. As the Vesna team reflected: after four years, the word *cizinky*, foreign women, no longer feels right. These are neighbours. **Please pray for Petra and for Vesna as this work enters a new phase.**

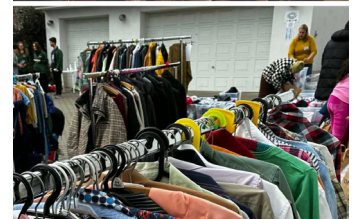
In November, Lea became a Czech citizen. The process involved language and cultural exams: the constitutional system, history and geography, all in Czech. This was followed by a ceremony at which he stood and heard the national anthem. When he tells Czech friends, the typical response is a wry smile: "Why on earth would you do that?" It's classic Czech humour. But for him, becoming a citizen was a moment of significance, a sign of honour, commitment and of making a home here. Since we arrived, people have asked regularly when we'll be leaving; the average stay for a missionary in this country is four years.

Olivia's national exams are just weeks away and we are choosing which secondary schools to apply to. This is quite a milestone in the Czech system, where children remain in primary until they are 15. Ted celebrated his 13th birthday this week. Two teenagers in a two-roomed house is a challenge, so the building work that has finally begun is much needed, even if it means half a roof, and a boiler that packed up on 2 January in the middle of a cold winter.

The chain of memory was broken here long ago and it would be easy to see that as the end of the story. Václav Havel, speaking politically, wrote that, "perhaps hopelessness is the very soil that nourishes human hope." We know a greater hope still: that God brings life from death and that no chain is beyond mending. Thank you for your prayers, which make it possible for us to be here and be part of that patient work.

With love and gratitude,

Lea and Petra



Photos from top to bottom: Our new community choir alongside singers from a local university at the Service of Lessons and Carols, filmed by Czech Television; Vesna: a talk from local companies on entering the workplace and the Šatník in action, some of it moving outside in the warmer weather; Lea receiving Czech citizenship in Brno, November 2025; half a roof and counting: much-needed building work begins on our home



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 Honduras, mission partners are providing mentoring for children who are likely to drop out of school, or not receive any education. They are introducing them to education and to the love of Jesus. Read more and get inspired by other stories of hope at churchmissionsociety.org/bringhope

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