



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,

How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? This question, asked by the psalmist in exile, sits underneath the kind of questions asked at a conference on reading the signs of the times, which Lea attended in Prague this summer. What is the church for, now that it no longer holds society together? How do we read our own times honestly? Where is Christ already at work beyond the church walls? What does growth mean when it cannot be counted? Tomáš Halík, opening the day, called reading these signs the church's most urgent task.

Such questions shape our work. Most people we meet are not hostile to faith. They are wary of the church as an institution, and it is simply not where they look for answers. Among the younger generation it is less settled: some are searching, though with little story to go on. Scripture's own answer to the exiles came in a letter: build houses, plant gardens, and seek the peace of the city where you have been sent, for in its peace you will find your own (Jeremiah 29:5,7). Dutch missiologist Stefan Paas says much the same to the church in secular Europe. Evangelism, he writes, "is about making peace on all levels: on the individual level, in building communities, and in contributing to the wider society and the world in which we live. God has made peace with us; he calls us to do the same. This is the great message of Christianity: the gospel of peace" (2024:263). This year we have caught glimpses of each.

Last semester a student typed "Christian Masaryk University" into a search engine and found Lea. He had been reading Nietzsche and felt hopeless without the thought of God. So, incidentally, did Nietzsche. This young man had no one to ask. He now comes to UKH, the student ministry Lea supports. Several younger people here are asking such questions. That is why we are starting Café Theology, an evening of theology and philosophy in a pub, beginning with the transcendentals: truth, goodness and beauty. UKH kicks off again on 16 September, and on 18–19 we will gather student leaders from across the country to plan and pray for the year ahead. **Please pray for these students as they take responsibility for Bible studies and lectures across the Brno faculties, and for those who arrive with questions of their own.**

At the end of May our village held its hody, a feast day celebration, which here falls on Trinity Sunday and this year also marked 250 years of the village. Hody has always opened with a Catholic mass at the chapel



*Students at the UKH exam
season barbecue*

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



on the green. No priest was free, so they asked Lea to lead a service in Czech instead. We were touched to be involved this way. Lea spoke about the Trinity: that God is not solitary but a communion of love, and that what a village feels on a day of dancing, celebration and feasting is a glimpse of it. Girls from the village sang. We prayed for those who live and work here, and for everyone who has stood at that chapel before us. The service ended with the words: "Go, you are sent. Celebrate, dance, eat, drink, love your neighbours." Several people were moved. Lea has since been asked whether we would do the same at Christmas. **Please pray for us as we make our home here.**

In June, a delegation of women from across Europe spent three days in Brno to visit Vesna, and attend a conference on justice for women. A Czech member of the European Parliament and a pro-rector from Mendel University spoke first, on policy and data. Petra was asked to speak about the work itself: what Vesna has learned through supporting women and children, Ukrainian and Czech families in poverty. Much of this is for women whose housing, status and future are all uncertain. Petra spoke about women working two jobs, spending their evenings making nets for the front, volunteering at Vesna while still needing help themselves, their children slow to settle. It is the direct, practical work that restores dignity and resilience. Empowerment and justice for women, she said, have to begin with the women most at risk, and be worked out in particulars rather than in policy. Please pray for Vesna and those they work alongside, and for those whose lives are still shaped by the war, that their experiences would be heard.

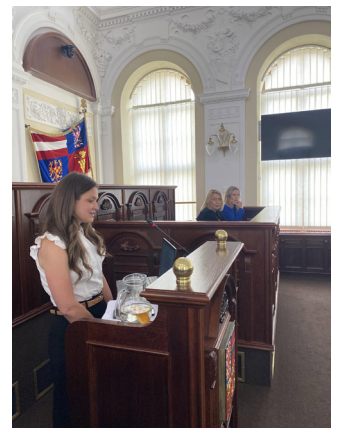
At home, thank you for praying for Olivia through a long spring of exams and applications. She has a place at a Czech secondary school and starts in September, a real answer to prayer. Ted reaches the same milestone in two years. Places are won on entrance exams in Czech, and his Czech is not his sister's, so an international school may be the only route open to him. **Please pray for wisdom as we think this through.**

Most weeks are the ordinary work: leading a church, welcoming newcomers, serving, building community, and Petra at Vesna. **Please pray for kindness, graciousness and peace in all our interactions, and that others would join us in leading and serving.** Paas thinks "peace" is the best word we have for the whole biblical vision of salvation, one that takes in all of God's creation, and that it makes a claim on us: "God's peaceful kingdom can only be inhabited by people of peace" (2024:271). The bishop who ordained Lea ended a talk on evangelism like this: "We make disciples. And disciples make peace" (Cottrell, Lambeth Conference, 2022). Thank you for your prayers, which sustain us as we work for peace in Brno.

With love and gratitude,

Lea and Petra

*References are from the book
Peace on Earth by Stefan Paas*



Photos from top to bottom: Lea leading the service at our village feast day celebration; Olivia sorting wellies at Vesna; justice for women conference; Petra thanking Vesna volunteers



Discovering creative ways to share the hope of Jesus

We love to hear from other CMS partners sharing the hope of Jesus with people not yet connected to church. Read Andy Roberts's reflection on his time with the charity ReVive in Brazil and hear his thoughts on how mission needs to keep creatively changing. And be challenged by a thought-provoking piece on the role of migration in mission. Read and learn more about creative mission at churchmissionsociety.org/bringhope

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