

# Lea and Petra Williams

Link Letter no. 2 | February 2022

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CHURCH  
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*The call in action*

Dear friends,

We've made it! In early September we packed up our trusty Kia Picanto and set off on our seventeen-hour drive from Oxford, where we'd been training with CMS since January, to our placement in Brno, Czech Republic. While there were a few cries of "are we there yet?" (some even before we'd crossed the Channel!), we were so thankful for a smooth, uneventful journey, as we'd been a little concerned given the age of our car.

Our first weeks in the Czech Republic were spent settling in, meeting our neighbours and preparing our new home. There was, and still is, quite a bit to do on the house, but after washing up in the shower and cooking in our bedroom for six weeks, we are pleased to now have a functioning kitchen and a couple of other rooms.

On 17 November the Czech Republic marked Struggle for Freedom and Democracy Day with a national holiday, as the events which led to the end of the communist rule in former Czechoslovakia were remembered once again. It was also a time to take stock of the nation's rapid transition to democracy and a market economy, for while the economy is thriving the transition has created deep feelings of injustice and resentment in those who feel "left behind". We have therefore sought to begin our ministry here by listening deeply to the hopes and concerns of those around us.

The position of our new home has been key in forming relationships, as it overlooks a former well that functions as a meeting point for the community. During our early weeks, we were blessed with warm weather. Each evening people would gather at the well to share news and a drink as they enjoyed the setting sun. We were quickly welcomed into community life, and subsequently receive knocks on our kitchen window throughout the day from neighbours wanting to chat; people rarely make it to the door! Ted and Olivia have also been making friends and go off playing and riding their bikes. We're also starting an English group at the request of the local mayor.

As we reflect on the importance of the well to this community, we cannot help but reflect on Jacob's well and Jesus' meeting with the Samaritan woman. While they exist miles and centuries apart, both witness to the transformational potential of invitational conversation and simple acts of charity. In the spiritually charged Gospel encounter we read of how Jesus, after receiving the woman's hospitality, moves from being a guest to divine



**Name:** Lea and Petra Williams

**Location:** Brno, Czech Republic

**Our call:** To create Christian community committed to missional hospitality, where all are welcome and play a part in God's mission

**Our role:** To lead the Anglican congregation in Brno and develop a vibrant Christian community where people explore faith, meet Jesus and grow as disciples



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*Our car packed and ready to drive the 17 hours from Oxford to Brno.*

host, offering her the “gift of God” and “living water” (John 4:7). We feel that this way of inhabiting the world gives us, and all people who seek to lead a missional life, a tangible way to create space, welcome our neighbours and draw those we serve into the hospitality of God’s love. Or in these beautiful words of Henri Nouwen: *“Hospitality... means primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place”* (from *Reaching Out*, 1976).

As we began to settle into our home and community, we sadly tested positive for COVID-19. The health authorities here were very strict at that point and required us to quarantine for two weeks, which they monitored through daily phone calls. Just as we were set to be released, Olivia, our 10-year-old daughter, became quite unwell with a secondary infection of the kidneys and was admitted to the children’s hospital. After a week’s stay, and a further course of antibiotics, her health returned, but it was a rather worrying time. It seems that COVID-19 can cause quite severe kidney damage if it is not treated swiftly. We are thankful for the Lord’s healing, for the skill of the doctors and for the care of our new neighbours who rallied around us. Here in Brno rates of COVID-19 remain high. Recently the city hospital was transferring patients to other parts of the country as ICU beds were at 95 per cent capacity.

Due to COVID-19, licensing services in this archdeaconry have been postponed, sadly. Lea’s is now scheduled for late February. In the meantime, he has Permission to Officiate, which he received recently.

With this in hand, it has been a joy to meet members of Christian community here and to dream about future possibilities together. We are now working on securing a worship space. There are several options that we’re exploring, each in a slightly different part of the city, so we are prayer walking and would welcome prayer for our discernment. We’re hoping for a space that will foster community as we practise missional hospitality, on Sunday but also mid-week. The church hasn’t met together physically since the pandemic began, so we are keen to gather again in the new space and renew the church’s worshipping and communal life, as we find ways to reach out and bless the city.

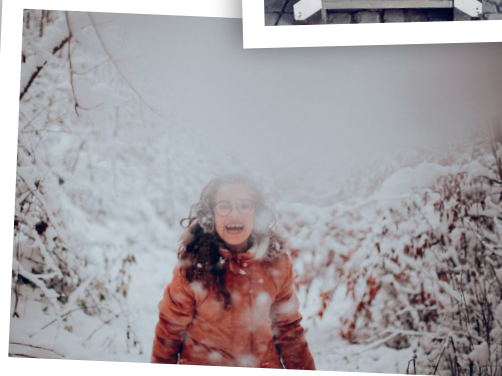
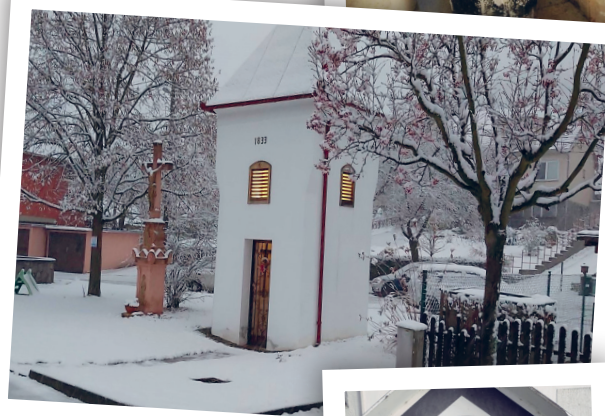
We are so thankful for everyone who has supported us as we’ve taken this step of faith – thank you for your prayers, generosity and friendship.

#### Please pray:

- For us as we enter the local community and begin building relationships.
- For a new meeting space, the regathering of the church community and relaunching of services as we reimagine mission during and after COVID-19.

For the Czech Republic at a time of unexpected political change.

Lea and Petra



Photos from top to bottom: Petra plastering – a skill not taught at theological college!; The well at the centre of our community; Ted exploring Spilberk Castle, Brno; Olivia enjoying the snow.

## GOING FURTHER WITH CHURCH MISSION SOCIETY

**Are you pondering a call to cross-cultural mission?** We’d love to connect and help you discern what God might be saying. Find out more about how we can help you to step into God’s mission at [churchmissionsociety.org/explore](https://churchmissionsociety.org/explore)

If you would like to discuss your mailings with us or to receive this link letter on a regular basis, please email [supporter.care@churchmissionsociety.org](mailto:supporter.care@churchmissionsociety.org) or call 01865 787400

You can give to Lea and Petra at:  
[churchmissionsociety.org/williams](https://churchmissionsociety.org/williams)

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