



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.

Dear friends,

Refugee crisis

The United Nations has reported that, as of 1 June, more than 6.9 million refugees have left Ukraine since Russia's invasion. While the majority have headed to Poland, 371,282, mainly older people, women and children, have been granted temporary protection visas by the Czech Republic. Ukrainians were already the largest migrant community in the country, so many refugees have joined family members already living here. Others are in temporary accommodation. The Czech government declared a state of emergency to deal with the crisis, a measure that will continue until the end of June.

As in many places across Europe, thousands of people filled the streets of Brno in protest at Russian aggression. Especially in those early days of the conflict people seemed edgy and nervous about the future. Indeed, the conflict felt very close to home for many Czechs, with some fearing that history would repeat itself and the "old order" re-established.

Four months on the government and NGOs are trying to transition from short-term crisis activities to more long-term support. The situation has, as you can imagine, shaped our ministry activities these past months. Petra is working with an organisation in the city centre, which was formerly a women's refuge but is now centred on helping refugees with everyday essentials such as clothes and toiletries, sorting and distributing donations, and providing care and support.

Recently the organisation was gifted the use of a former monastery by the Catholic Church and work to furnish it ready for use as short-term accommodation for women and children is now complete. The situation for many is heartbreaking, but it is wonderful to see people coming together to provide care and hospitality for those in need.

The house next to ours is home to several women and children. The kids like to come and play with our rabbit and hamsters, as well as Ted and Olivia. They can all play outside for hours, and the language barrier doesn't seem to get in the way!

When we left for the Czech Republic last September with a vision of living hospitably, we had no idea that the world would change so much, or that our ministry would be shaped in such a way, but we're praying that the Lord would use us as he wishes and that we can respond to this very present need.



Ted and Olivia bringing supplies for refugees.

Support Lea and Petra Williams:
churchmissionsociety.org/williams

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



Church life

Easter day was so joyful. The Anglican congregation met together in our new venue for the first time, beginning with an Easter Egg hunt, which the children loved, and then gathered for worship. We rejoiced in the new life that Jesus brings and prayed that this new beginning for the church community would be full of resurrection life, bringing hope and joy to those we serve. We sang familiar hymns and songs and finished with lots of Czech cakes and sweets.

The building, a former soup kitchen that has now been turned into a little chapel, is within walking distance of the city centre, and yet is in the middle of a housing estate. There

is so much potential for outreach and serving the community. It's a real answer to prayer!

In May Lea was licensed for this ministry by Archdeacon Leslie Nathaniel (Diocese in Europe) at St Clement's, Prague. It was a joyful time, and we were thrilled to welcome Tanas and Philip, our managers from CMS.

Family life

In March Olivia and Ted started at a local Czech school. They love going and have made strong friendships already. Lea continues to work part time to support our ministry here. Please do pray for him as he manages his various commitments, particularly as we seek to develop the church's outreach, and that in time his hours could be reduced.

One highlight of our time has been celebrating an annual folk festival with the village community. This past Saturday, after many weeks of practising in the village hall, Petra and the kids wore regional clothes and joined in traditional Czech dances on the square (which our home overlooks), and Lea was asked to join with a local Catholic priest to open the festival with an open-air service. We have received such a warm welcome from our new neighbours.

As we invest in relationships and live a life of missional hospitality in the way of Christ, we're learning that we need to be both good guests as well as good hosts. We've been re-reading Christine Pohl's remarkable book *Making Room*. In it she reminds us that, "Jesus welcomes and needs welcome; Jesus requires that followers depend on and provide hospitality." Both roles require a spirit of openness and vulnerability, if not a little discomfort too, but with practice living as community allows us to "blossom and grow and witness to the world", embodying God's redeeming and reconciling purpose for all things, as pictured by Jesus as an overflowing banquet table for all people willing to accept his hospitality (Matt 22:10). Indeed, for the Christian community "hospitality becomes a way of being the sacrament of God's love in the world".

Thank you once again for joining us in prayer. We are so thankful for your partnership. Please do let us know how we can be praying for you and your church community.

Yours in Christ,

Lea and Petra



Photos from top to bottom: Thousands in Brno protest against the Russian invasion of Ukraine. (Photo: Ben Skála, CC BY-SA 4.0); The new church venue on Easter Day; Lea's licensing service; Preparing to dance at the traditional festival.



Going further with Church Mission Society

Prayer is the engine room of mission: Here at CMS, we know that the history of mission is the history of answered prayer. We would love you to join us as a praying community around the world at churchmissionsociety.org/prayer

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