



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,

We write upon returning to Brno from a CMS regional conference in Istanbul, Turkey. The gathering, which was the first in several years due to COVID, brought together mission partners and their families from all over Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. We were moved by the countless stories of God's extraordinary work through his people, especially in challenging circumstances. We joined in prayer and supported one another, and left with renewed hope and encouragement. The conference also provided us with a chance to pause and reflect on our life and ministry in Brno following several full months.



Excitement building – boarding the plane for the CMS conference

Looking back

We began 2023 in prayer for the year ahead with a national annual ecumenical service which was this time held in Brno (and broadcast on state TV) and had Galatians 5:5 as its theme – “But we, by the power of the Spirit and in faith, await the righteousness that is our hope” – and included reflections from Ukrainian Christians. At the end of the service Lea was invited to join Christian leaders in praying for God's blessing on the country as it awaited the election of a new president and responded to the war in Europe as well as rising inequality due to the increased cost of living.

The New Year also brought some welcome news and an answer to prayer. Within days of the outbreak of war in Ukraine, Vesna's (Women's Educational Institute Brno) “wardrobe” project became one of the largest humanitarian aid centres in the country. In the first three weeks the project recorded 30,000 visits, 200-300 families per day. At first this was held at the Moravia Gallery, however, due to the numbers of people accessing the services, it was no longer sufficient to meet the growing need. We were pleased, at the turn of the year, to strengthen our partnership with Vesna through the Anglican Church in Brno. We successfully applied for funding from the Diocese in Europe's lent appeal, which is administered by USPG, to help cover some of the costs of relocating to new premises and to increase capacity for both practical and psychological support. Please do pray for the wonderful team, many of whom are volunteers, as they offer care and hope to all who come through their doors.

On Easter Sunday, which marked one year of weekly services in Brno, we had much to celebrate. As we rejoiced in the hope of the resurrection at our Sunday gathering one of our postgraduate students was baptised and spoke movingly about Christ's presence in his life. Our congregation that day was wonderfully diverse, with attendees hailing from various corners of the globe, from Canada to Taiwan. As we do most Sundays, after worship we spent time over food, getting to know each other and nurturing our community life.

(Thinking of food and community life, for the coronation of King Charles III we held a day-long garden party

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



at Vesna. There were opportunities to volunteer for a few hours, especially working in a community garden, share food together and enjoy performances from university singers and a local Scottish dancing group. [You can see a few highlights here.](#)

Over the weekend, we had the privilege of being in Vienna alongside members of the Anglican Church in Budapest for a confirmation service led by the former bishop of London, Richard Chartres. It was wonderful to join the candidates during this significant milestone in their spiritual journeys as followers of Jesus.

Looking forward

With the arrival of warmer days, Brno is gradually slowing down in preparation for summer. Currently, student members of the church are immersed in their final exams, and soon some will depart to reunite with their families. As for us, we aim to take this opportunity to recharge and plan for September.

Since joining CMS, Lea has been dedicating 25–30 hours per week to tentmaking, providing financial support for our ministry. Combined with ongoing language learning and Petra's commitment to work at Vesna, our lives have been "full on", leaving little time for rest. However, we received wonderful news this week that CMS, thanks to your generous giving, can increase their level of support. This is an answer to prayer that will allow us to dedicate more time to discipleship and the growth of the church.

After Easter it was fantastic to return to England, if only for two Sundays, to speak and worship with partnering churches. Thank you once again to those who hosted us and showed such kindness and interest in the work. While it is customary for mission partners to visit partnering churches before commencing their service, the ongoing impact of COVID prevented us from doing so. However, since we are not too far away, we plan to return a couple of times this year and would be delighted to participate in services or house groups through Zoom as well.

Points for prayer

Recently, our car experienced an unforeseen breakdown in a nearby supermarket carpark, revealing multiple engine failures. Unfortunately, the garage has been facing challenges in obtaining the necessary replacement parts due to a national shortage. Please pray for the swift return of our car and that we would be able to cover the repair expenses, which we anticipate may be significant.

Please would you pray for a de-escalation in ethnic tensions between Brno's two largest minorities, Ukrainians and Romani people. [There have been clashes and protests following an altercation and the death of a 23-year-old man last week.](#) There has been a police presence at Vesna to maintain order.

We look forward to the children having some time off. Please pray for times of refreshment and fun as a family and that we would know the Lord's guidance as we plan and look ahead to the new academic year.

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.

Lea and Petra



Photos from top to bottom: Christian leaders praying for God's blessing upon the Czech Republic; moving Vesna to its new home; Petra speaking about the work of Vesna; coronation celebrations with a picnic and dessert competition



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Jesus never gives up. Neither should we. We live in a fractured, hurting world. It can be tempting to give up: on hope, on people, on the idea that things can ever change. Yet, Jesus invites us to follow him on a journey to the edges. Find out more at churchmissionsociety.org/nevergiveup

Please note that opinions expressed in link letters are those of mission partners, not necessarily of Church Mission Society.

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