

--- Policka Press ---

Information and thoughts from the Czech Republic

By: Jeremy and Jamie Ault

Issue 1 Sept. 8, 2008



Hello, and greetings from the Czech Republic. Jeremy and I are excited about the new school year and the start of our classes. For those who do not know us, Jeremy and I grew up and went to college near

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Jeremy has a degree in history and mine is in biology. We got married February 23rd and lived in Ohio for 4 months working as environmental educators. Jeremy is fond of JIF peanut butter and I love candy. Along with this newsletter we have set up a blog, which will have pictures and our thoughts.

www.czechtheline.blogspot.com

Classes

Jamie and I have started the process of planning classes and gathering material. There are two of us, which means that we can split the work evenly and focus our talents into a few specialized programs and curriculum. We will be offering a wide array of options for both adults and children alike. I will be teaching classes that encompass the ages of 8th grade up to adult and Jamie will be teaching 1st grade up to 7th, where she can focus on art and craft-based education, which goes over very well with the smaller children.

Under Kati, the adult classes were conversational, as they were predicated around discussion and cultural exchange. This style of class is very helpful, but since Jamie and I are splitting the work load, we have decided to offer three variations of an adult program: one class will encompass basic grammar and

vocabulary geared toward beginners; the second class is a conversational class, with its foundation in Kati's program; and the third adult course will be business English, where we will focus on resumes, applications, interviewing and vocabulary. Consequently, the two new classes will be more structured with lessons and some homework, which was requested by some of the adults who were involved in the conversation classes.

For the high school students, we will be offering a conversational class much like Kati's, but will be focusing our energies around a "University Preparation /Exit Exam" English course, where the students will read, write and speak. Again, in similar fashion to the two new adult courses, this class will be more structured as an actual academic course.

Jamie has come up with the idea to incorporate art, sculpture and drawing into the conversation classes for the younger students. We hope that the addition of art will get the students excited to learn new words in an environment of creativity. The conversation classes will keep their main core that sets our programs apart from school, in that students will take part in drama, art, music, sport and games.

Jamie and I are also hoping to lay the ground work for two community activities that will dove-tail nicely with what Kati started with the band (Cerne Ovce). Jamie has in the works specific classes focused on exploring different mediums of art. Our vision is to have a few seasonal art "openings", where our students can display their work for the community to see. The art showing will take place in the Church, with the hope that parents and community members, who have never stepped foot in a church, will enter the building.

Additionally, we want to start an

athletic program. We feel that athletics will attract a diverse array of people who are interested in playing sports or learning new ones. Our first order of business is to start a softball program. We introduced this idea to some of the youth and they are very anxious to get started, but we lack basic equipment. So, if you have any extra gloves our bats lying around in your garage, sending them to us in the Czech Republic would go a long way.

Culture

Czech history is tumultuous. It is filled with wars, oppression, empires and misunderstanding. Often, the Czechs have been a people overlooked. Many do not have to look further than 1938, when Prime Minister Chamberlain of Britain literally gave Czechoslovakia to Hitler in hopes of appeasing the Nazi appetite for world domination; it didn't work, as we all know. However, this story is a perfect example of how many times, in the past, the Czechs have gotten run over by more powerful neighbors. I mean, the list goes on: Holy Roman Empire, the Hapsburgs, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Nazis and then the Soviet Union.

Learning and hearing about this history begs the question: how has this past influenced the Czech psyche today? Each day Jamie and I are thrust into a situation where a little piece of the puzzle is placed. Will we really ever understand the whole? Probably not, because two years is not long enough, but we know that in each activity and conversation, we are getting glimpses into their worldview and mentality. This happened recently, when Jamie and I were invited to see a concert.



The band named the “Spiritual Quintet (Kvintet)” played a free show in a village five miles away from Policka. What makes them so powerful, in the eyes of Czech people, is that they were a voice of freedom and served as a bastion of deep spirituality during the Communist era, a time characterized by state-sanctioned atheism and social oppression.

When we arrived, Jamie and I found out that many of their songs had a familiar tune. The reason for this instant recognition was that the songs they were singing in Czech, had their root from Black hymns from the South. We were told that the band began playing these hymns, because they could make the lyrics ambiguous enough as to not make much noise with the Communist party, because if they were too “up-front” with their spiritual lyrics, they would have had their music license revoked. This band, and the fact that their musical preference is Gospel hymns, has much to say about the Czech mindset.

Those spiritual hymns were written as songs of freedom for slaves 200 years ago in the American south. They were a way to escape the harsh reality of every-day bondage, as the songs turned weary eyes toward heaven as opposed to the present, physical reality. It was an escape. And, here, we find that it was these same hymns, written by black slaves, that gave a message of freedom and hope to a people who suffered under Communism. Jamie and I have only begun to ask the questions, but we leave it up to you to wrestle with this significance in your own mind.

News

Thanks to the support of Tom and Tami Ribar, we now have a bank account open at National City Bank, which will be used solely for our ministry here in the Czech Republic.

To send us monetary donations, all you have to do is:

1. Write a Czech out to "Poli ka Mission"
2. Memo to Jeremy and Jamie Ault
3. Send it to this address:
699 Ross St.
Waynesburg, Pa
15370