

Czech Mission Network News

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Faithful Christian, search for the truth, hear the truth, learn the truth, love the truth, speak the truth, hold the truth, defend the truth until death.... MASTER JOHN HUS

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EVANGELICAL CHURCH OF CZECH BRETHERN (ECCB)



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The ECCB originated in the year 1918 through the unification of the Protestant churches of the Lutheran and Reformed confessions, which were permitted only after the harsh Counter-Reformation movement ended. However, the ECCB has deeper roots in the Czech reformation: in the Utraquist *Hussite Church* (1431–1620) and in the Unity of Brethren Church (1457–1620). The ECCB has about 115,000 members in more than 260 congregations which are broken down into 14 seniorates (presbyteries) throughout the Czech Republic. At the head of the church is the 6 member Synodal Council, elected for a six-year term of office and represented by the Synodal Senior and the Synodal Curator.

DIACONIA OF THE ECCB

Diakonie 
Československé církve evangelické

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Diaconia (from the Greek *diakonein*: to serve) originated in the year 1989 as a special establishment of the church for serving people in need. It continues the work of the old Czech Diaconia (1903–1952). It has 33 centers throughout the entire Czech Republic, which provide the following services: retirement homes for the elderly; care for people with mental and combined disabilities; care for people with health afflictions; health care and nursing services; guidance and community work; work with the homeless and unemployed; work with the Romany. The Diaconia also operates eight special schools for children with mental and combined disabilities. It is administered by a 9 member board led by a chairperson who is elected by the Synod of the ECCB for a four-year term of office. The board chooses the director of the Diaconia.

PROTESTANT THEOLOGICAL FACULTY OF CHARLES UNIVERSITY (PTF-CU)



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The faculty is the successor of the Hussite Faculty (1919–1950) with an interruption between the years 1939–45) and the Comenius Faculty (1950–90). In the year 1990 it was incorporated into Charles University. The administration of the faculty is directed by a dean of faculty and 4 assistant deans, elected for a three-year term of office. The faculty has 8 departments and 3 institutes. For the school year 2007–2008, the faculty has approximately 550 students. The faculty is ecumenically open to all. Pastors of the ECCB receive their theological education here.

Editorial: Freely and Without Fear

Almost twenty years ago, we watched with amazement and gratitude as the former rulers of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe suddenly gave up their power. A new era – an era of freedom – had arrived. Thanks to that, we acquired many rights. We have gradually discovered the rules of freedom that produce the best fruit for human life. More and more, we are realizing that to live in freedom and without fear depends surprisingly little on regime changes or on the social climate. Just as we once knew fear of other people and fear for life, we also know that today. And just like before, we now realize that the conditions of freedom can be good soil for human enslavement. It is increasingly clear that living in freedom and without fear primarily depends on how the human heart has been shaped.

Therefore, it is no wonder that the ECCB has chosen an invitation to freedom and to a life without fear as the motto of the 90th anniversary of its founding. There are several reasons for this. In part, the motto honors the fact that as early as 1918, our fathers and mothers decided to start the process of uniting. They helped two Protestant churches – the Lutheran and Reformed – become one.

The motto also wants to remind us of the difficult times when the church existed in a society governed by totalitarian systems and when it had to overcome far more obstacles for the sake of life in freedom and without fear than it faces now. Consequently, with this motto, the church also wants to acknowledge that it was not always strong, and that it knows life without freedom and in fear. We want to express considerable gratitude to the Lord God for the fact that without great merit on our part, he has liberated us from undemocratic systems and has given us a new chance to both replenish the freedom, which he gives, and to live without fear, as he desires.

Accordingly, this motto also wants to be a call to the future, so that at times when, by virtue of prosperity, it may go well for us externally, we will not forget that true freedom lies in the Spirit of Christ and in love for truth. Life without fear rests only in this, as the human being responds with love to the love of God revealed in Christ. The Bible tells us that fear causes anguish. That is why we must do everything we can so that the misery of fear will vanish from our life together, and people will gradually realize that the source of freedom is in Christ and that liberation from fear lies with the one who is able to give up his fear for himself. We may see that in Christ and in the many faithful and courageous witnesses who have presented vivid pictures of his truth throughout the history of the church.

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■ The First United Church in the Heart of Europe

This year, we are commemorating the fact that ninety years ago, in an unbelievably short time after the formation of the Republic of Czechoslovakia, a General Assembly of Czech Protestants was called on December 17-18. At that event, the merger of the Lutheran and Reformed Churches was unanimously approved. Thus, following the First World War, something was accomplished in our country that still had not happened in neighboring nations, for example in Germany and Holland, at the end of the twentieth century, i.e., a unification of two Protestant churches into a single denomination, which was later named the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren.

A little history

The ECCB's roots lie in the Czech Reformation at the end of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth centuries, about a hundred years earlier than the start of the Protestant Reformation. At that time, an effort to restore the church in the kingdom of Bohemia led to a reform movement and to alienation from Rome. Jan Hus, the rector of the university in Prague, strove for a better understanding of the Bible and for the renewal of the church. He was condemned in Constance for his allegiance to the Gospel, and was burned at the stake in June 1415. Hus' successors excelled in the effort to bring the church into conformity with the standard of God's word. Their program was succinctly formulated in 1420 under the title, "The Four Articles of Prague."

In the second half of the fifteenth century, a new generation of reformers separated from the radical Hussites. In 1457, the resulting Unity of Czech Brethren settled in the village of Kunvald in order to establish a Christian community that would live by following Christ. The Unity of Brethren represents the apex of the Czech Reformation. Evidence of this is the especially widely-known Kralická Bible. The most well-known figure of the Unity of Brethren was their final bishop, John Amos Comenius, who was renowned throughout Europe as a theologian, educator, and untiring proponent of "the universal reform of all human affairs," which he sought to bring about by educating broad sectors of the population.

The pressure of the Counter-reformation increased during the reign of the Roman Catholic Hapsburgs, which began in 1526. However, at a regional assembly in 1575, the Czech lords called for the resolution of the issue of religion by means of a joint confession. That was based on the Augsburg Confession and the Second Helvetic Confession, but it simultaneously drew upon the Four Articles of Prague and preserved the emphases of the Czech Reformation. Nevertheless, full religious freedom was not achieved until the Imperial Charter was issued by Emperor Rudolf II in 1609. Unfortunately, the Charter's legal force ended with the Battle of White Mountain in 1620. After that, the unyielding Counter-reformation, which was characterized by the prohibition of all non-Catholic churches, followed. That was a great calamity for a population that was 90% Protestant. A large segment of the population emigrated, and the remaining Protestants were forcibly re-catholicized.

This very difficult period, which was defined by a lack of religious freedom, lasted for 160 years. During that time, five generations were born, the last of which lived to see Emperor Joseph II issue the Edict of Toleration on October 13, 1781.

Before the Merger

The Edict of Toleration did not make it possible for Czech Protestants to resume the Czech Reformation and to restore the Utraquist Church and the Unity of Brethren. Only the Helvetic and Augsburg Confessions were permitted. However, the two resulting denominations soon resumed relationships with their sister churches in other countries.

The Reformed Church (Helvetic Confession) was larger than the Lutheran (Augsburg Confession), and there were tensions between them. However, awareness of their common roots in the Czech Reformation brought the two denominations together, and in the nineteenth century, the influence of the Czech Reformation grew as a result of a resurgent interest in Czech culture. Thus, as early as 1907, representatives of both churches jointly articulated their desire for union, and formed an organizational committee for that purpose.

The Republic of Czechoslovakia was established on October 28, 1918, and just a few days later, the organizational committee called for a General Assembly of Czech Protestants to be held in Prague in mid-December. That assembly unanimously passed a resolution on a joint merger.

The General Assembly

From the outset, pastors and lay persons were equally represented at the assembly, and many of them were prominent figures in public and cultural life. All of the indigenous congregations in the Czech lands were able to participate in the assembly through their pastors and through representatives from their sessions. 122 of 139 congregations were represented at the assembly. 109 of 127 pastors and 120 of 145 authorized members of the sessions came, for a total of 229 – or 84% – of 272 possible participants. Around two thousand persons gathered at the Municipal House for the main meeting. The assembly worshipped together, elected a president, and chose a synodal commission of nine members and five alternates. (Later, this group came to be known as the Synodal Council.)

Let us cite an excerpt from the text of the resolution:

The Protestant Churches of the Augsburg and Helvetic Confessions both unanimously and ceremoniously resolve that after three centuries of forced separation from their fathers, they are returning to them and are again overtly taking up the legacy of the Czech Hussite Reformation, the Utraquist church, and the Unity of Brethren. Since they both have one origin in the example of their fathers' churches, they have merged and have declared themselves to be a united church. They are embodying this decision by having the gospel be the foundation of the unified church, which professes the Czech Confession of 1575 to be the standard of its faith and the Brethren Confession of J.A. Comenius from 1662 to be the final statement of the Czech Brethren's belief.

Building up the Congregations:

A Time of Blossoming

1919–1939: The Years between the Wars

The number of members grew to around 200,000, primarily as a result of a post-war movement that focused on exercising religious choice. Churches buildings were constructed with great self-sacrifice, and there was a church-wide collection so that the buildings which house the central church offices could be reconstructed. The denomination's expanding activity placed considerable demands on church workers. In 1919, the Protestant Theological Faculty, at which outstanding teachers worked, was established in Prague.

Kalich, the denominational publishing house, was founded in 1920 to publish magazines, books, and other materials. Great care was devoted to educating children and youth. Classes in religion were offered in the schools, and Bible studies were held. On Sunday, there was special worship – Sunday School – for children, and in 1928, the Comenius Summer Camp was opened to provide children with holiday outings focused on religious education.

After confirmation, youth could associate with one another through the “Youth Federation.” A student movement known as the Academic YMCA was established on Christian foundations. Social work – organized on the congregational level as Christian Service and on the denominational level through the ECCB’s Diaconia – also had an important place within the ECCB.

After twenty years, the promising development of the united church was disrupted by the signing of the Munich Agreement in September, 1938, the subsequent occupation by Germany, and the establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia on March 15, 1939. These developments put an end to life in a free and democratic state for a long time.

1939 to 1945: The Second World War No Synods were held

The Synodal Council elected by the Synod in December, 1939 ran the church until 1945. At that time, the lay moderator, Dr. Antonín Boháč, said: “In the apocalyptic times into which we are moving, no violence will compel us to bow before evil and to serve it.” It is possible to say that the ECCB often drew upon these words during this difficult ordeal.

During the war, many members of the ECCB were imprisoned, sent to concentration camps, or executed. (Out of the twelve ministers who were imprisoned, four were put to death.) Manses became shelters to which those who had to flee before the occupiers often turned. A number of members of the church were active participants in the resistance. With the help of other members of the congregations, elders assumed care for worship and congregational life in cases where a pastor was suspended from service or imprisoned.

With the closing of Czech universities following the events of November 17, 1939, a course was established by the Synodal Council for deacons, i.e., for members of the ECCB who were prepared to help out in the parishes after taking their examinations. Following the war, these graduates were in a position to round out their studies in a short time.

The most horrifying time was the period after the assassination of the Reich protector, R. Heydrich, in 1943, when, under martial law, the list of executed people grew by dozens of names everyday.

In 1944, Moderator, Josef Křenek and Lay Moderator, Dr. Antonín Boháč were banished from Prague because they refused to sign the anti-communist manifesto of the League against Bolshevism.

In spite of all the difficulties and horror of wartime, it was possible to keep regular worship services and all congregational activities going. Congregational premises became islands of freedom in which the precepts that Christ had instituted for his people held true.

1948-1980: A Time Lacking in Freedom

In 1948, the communist government came to power. Subsequently, a number of activities were totally prohibited for forty years. Work in prisons, in the army, and the organization and implementation of charity and social work were among these. The existence of Christian churches was hampered, systematically and relentlessly. The work of the Diaconia was halted; retirement homes ceased to be in operation;

work with youth and the existence of Sunday Schools were forbidden. There was no church educational system, and the number of people studying at theological faculties was limited by the state.

1989–2008: Stepping Forward into Freedom

After the dissolution of the totalitarian state, many people expected that the time of freedom would also bring a surge in church membership, which, of course, did not happen. According to statistics, the ECCB now has around 115,000 members and is continuing to record a moderate decline. However, the numbers of active participants in worship services and congregational life are not changing very much, and some places even record a moderate increase.

After 1989, it was possible to resume activities that had been prohibited for entire decades. The ECCB’s Diaconia had already re-established itself in June, 1989, before the communist system collapsed. Today, it operates 33 centers. In 1990, pastoral care, which was completely ecumenical from the very beginning, was developed in prisons. Pastoral service in the army was initially regarded with great distrust. However, the introduction of army chaplains was one of the conditions of the admission of the Czech Republic into NATO. This service is also completely ecumenical and has acquitted itself very well, especially in the combat conditions that sometimes characterize missions to other countries. At the present time, chaplaincy service in medical institutions is being discussed. A pilot program has been launched at some hospitals.

The ECCB has founded one elementary school, a church conservatory, and three schools focused on providing workers with a socio-legal education. The Protestant Theological Faculty has been incorporated into Charles University, and some of its students are from non-church backgrounds. For future pastors, the ECCB has established a one-year, postgraduate course of study called the vicariate.

In the church, great care has traditionally been devoted to raising and educating children and youth. A church-wide Youth Congress is held every year. Several times a year, gatherings of youth, and of children with their parents, take place on presbytery and congregational levels. Bible courses, vacation outings, and camps are also held for children and youth.

The Church Universal – Ecumena

The church naturally has the most reciprocal relations with neighboring churches and, in particular, with Protestant churches in Germany. However, it also maintains a large number of partnership relations with other European and non-European churches. It is no exaggeration to say that few other churches in the Czech Republic are as open to ecumenical discussions and relations as the ECCB is.

Into the future with hope

In spite of all of the difficulties and obstacles that have appeared on the church’s path, we can look toward the coming years with hope. There are many young people who are willingly taking up the burden of service and are entering into church work with fresh momentum. We are particularly guided by the awareness that it is not our fate to be delivered up to our short-comings or to the evil will of our enemies. The one who has called us has the final word.

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News of Interactions between Folks in the ECCB and the PC(USA)

■ Regarding the Walking Together Center

This edition of the CzMN News will reach you in the spring, rather than the winter, and will include this uncharacteristic column from its editor. However, there is good reason for this.

In January, the Prague 11 City Council announced that the center for homeless families – which has a ground-breaking relationship with the ECCB congregation in Jižní Město – must cease operation by February 28. This sad state of affairs led me to conclude that the winter edition of this publication must mention this development. However, as the days went on, the situation was difficult to pinpoint. Protests by Czech people and the church universal led to negotiations, which seemed to be moving in a positive direction. Then, the City Council of Prague 11 refused to change its original mandate. New protests and negotiations resulted in a one month delay of the closure date, and talks are continuing as I write.

This “shape-shifting” state of affairs meant that I did not know what to do. I wanted to encourage you to add your letter of protest to the outcry that was being raised by concerned Christians in other countries. Yet, I was hesitant to do that, lest a positive solution to the situation be imminent. At the same time, I felt that I must do something. Thus, I sent e-mails to participants in the Czech Mission Network, the PW’s Global Exchange, the 2008 Partnership Conference, and former reformation study tours, encouraging them to look at the website devoted to this situation and to respond as they saw fit.

This invitation led to an important question, worthy of careful thought, regarding whether responding to our partner’s request to write letters on behalf of the center might raise resentment against Americans for trying to inappropriately impinge upon the autonomy of another nation. This concern reflects a commendable sense of cross-cultural sensitivity. However, in this case, anyone who has written a letter in support of the center has actually joined the larger Ekumena in calling for a just and equitable solution to this challenging situation. Thus, although this publication is likely to reach you after the March 30 deadline, I want to thank you for continuing to make the compassionate love of Christ incarnate as you remember the staff and residents of the Walking Together Center, the people of the ECCB congregation in Jižní Město, and other faithful folks who dare to care for our most down-trodden brothers and sisters in your prayers and with your advocacy.

Joyce Michael ■

Additional information about this situation is available at www.sos-azyl.cz and www.czechconnections.cz.



■ Reflections by participants in the PW’s Global Exchange

Stories by two of the 28 Presbyterian Women visited the Czech Republic, Hungary, and the Ukraine in September 2008

The Cross and the Chalice

During the fall semester of 2000, my husband and I lived in the Czech community of Ostrava for four months. While there, we spent many hours walking around the city and smaller villages nearby.

One day we happened upon a large cemetery and were fascinated by the gravestones and engravings. We noticed the cross prominently displayed on some, and the chalice on others. No graves had both. At that time, we weren’t sure of the significance.

On our next visit to the Czech Republic with a group from the Scioto Valley Presbytery, we learned more about the troubled history of Christianity in the Czech lands and the significance of the chalice, not only on graves but also on churches. Wherever it appears, the chalice is a symbol of Protestant alliances. Thus, the sometimes bloody history of the Czech reformers’ struggles with Roman Catholicism is called to mind whenever one sees a chalice.



Participants in the Global Exchange being greeted by ECCB partners (Photo: Laura Lee)

Of course, we now live in the twenty-first century, and society is very different. Yet, we can still see ways that our witness to the love of God through Jesus Christ is harmed by our divisions. The morning that participants in the Global Exchange spent with the Czech Ecumenical Forum of Christian Women provided a glimpse of what may be as time goes on. These Roman Catholic and Protestant women regularly come together to learn, to discuss, to share faith and fellowship, and to support efforts to improve conditions for women and children in the Czech Republic, throughout Europe, and in the world at large.

Singing hymns, sharing stories of mission, giving hand-knit scarves and other gifts, receiving gifts, eating together, laughing, and learning all made that day memorable. Above all, however, we especially encouraged each other to continue the work that is born of our commitment to Christ.

The cross is no longer automatically viewed as being a sign of oppression or violent struggle. It now appears in some Protestant churches and is even atop the recently-built ECCB church in Prague’s Jižní Město district. Together, the cross and chalice speak of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the gift of the Eucharist, which binds us together as the church, the living body of Christ.

May we remember the example of the Czech Ecumenical Forum of Christian Women, and emulate their commitment to unity.

Christine Fuller ■
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I have been lucky enough to travel to Eastern Europe before, so the Global Exchange was my third visit to Prague. However, this trip provided me with an experience unlike any of the others. As a tour-

ist, I had visited the usual the “sites to see” in Prague. However, I had not realized how rich this beautiful city is in sites that played an important part in the history of the reformed tradition of our Church. Although cathedrals and other historic buildings are pointed out on tours, Protestant churches are usually not featured. Even things I had seen before took on new meaning in light of the role that they had played in the history of the church.

However, the best part of the visit was being able to learn about the work of the ECCB and to meet Christian sisters and brothers who are actively involved in those endeavors. It is encouraging to know



Global Exchange participant, Anna McIlwain, with some new friends during a visit to an ECCB Church (Photo: Laura Lee)

that both lay and clergy women are working hard to improve the conditions of people – and especially of women – in need.

I particularly enjoyed meeting with the Czech Ecumenical Forum of Christian Women. Indeed, along with my cross, I often wear a small wooden chalice that was given to us by a woman named Helena. This provides me with many opportunities to tell others

about the significance that the chalice holds for Czech Protestants.

Another highlight of the Exchange was traveling to the cities of Pardubice and Vsetín. Sharing communion during Sunday worship with the ECCB congregation in Pardubice was particularly meaningful, and being able to fellowship with church members whom we met in both cities was very special. Even though language sometimes was a bit of a barrier, I felt connected with those folks through our common belief in the same God.

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■ Remembrances of the ECCB’s International Youth Conference in 2008

The camp at Herlikovice opened my mind to new perspectives, and I emerged from the experience a stronger person. The structure of the planned activities and free time provided many opportunities to explore serious questions and to bond with the other youth.

One highlight of the camp was a sixteen-mile hike to Sněžka, the highest mountain in the Czech Republic. There were also morning and afternoon sessions at which we studied the Bible and discussed our world. For me, the most interesting of these was when we focused on global inequality through a game that simulated the world economy. In this game, small groups represented real countries, and we were given resources with which to make money. It was eye-opening to see how everyone began the game as equals, but drifted apart as a result of inequitable circumstances.

Afternoon discussions often continued far into the night, and some of

my favorite memories are of informal conversations about the topics that we considered during the camp. Throughout the week, I felt very free to be myself, so it was a great time for me to develop my self-identity. The International Youth Conference was the high point of an already great summer, and I am still benefiting from the experience.

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Group photo of participants in the ECCB-PC(USA) Partnership Conference that took place in the Czech Republic in October 2008

In May 2008. I received an e-mail from my pastor entitled “Something to Think About.” After reading that the Presbytery was looking for someone to attend a Christian youth conference in the Czech Republic, I knew that this was more than something to think about. It was an opportunity to be acted upon. I contacted Betty McGinnis for more information, and before I knew it, I was making reservations with a travel agency. I was excited beyond belief.

Betty put me in touch with the other two PC(USA) youth with whom I would be traveling, and we began to plan a presentation about our Church and the United States. Soon, I was boarding a plane, more nervous than I could have imagined. However, after meeting Jacob and Justin, I felt much better about the trip.

We arrived in Prague on Thursday before anyone else, and had an interesting afternoon exploring the city in the rain. By Friday, our group had grown to include youth from Scotland, South Africa, and England. It was amazing how comfortable we all became around each other.

On Saturday, the rest of the group arrived, and we traveled to Herlíkovice where our group grew to 28: five from the Czech Republic, five from Slovakia, three from Hungary, two from Romania, two from Germany, two from Scotland, two from England, one from South Africa, three from the U.S.A., and three leaders. The camp was about learning, growing, and understanding each other. Each day was filled with worship and fellowship.

The week went by far too quickly, and we soon found ourselves heading back to Prague to wind up our time together. That weekend, it hurt to know that I would have to leave my new friends so soon. The bonds we had formed in that short time were strong. I feel blessed to have had this experience. Nothing I have ever experienced really compares to my time in the Czech Republic, and I’m afraid nothing ever will.

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The ECCB's next International Youth Conference will take place from July 25 through August 3, 2009. It will again be held at the ECCB's recreational center in the beautiful Krkonoše Mountains. Participants in the conference will play games, engage in sports, go on outings, sing, and explore the main theme, "Freedom and Liberation," from a variety of biblical, sociological, and international perspectives. This theme has been selected to mark the 20th anniversary of the end of the Cold War. If you are, or know of, a young person between the ages of 16 and 30 who would be interested in this event, please contact World Mission's Europe Office at jon.chapman@pcusa.org or champaka.srinivasan@pcusa.org. You may also download information and an application form from the Czech Mission Network's website: www.czechconnections.org



■ Excerpts from "A Question of Partnership"

A present-tense account by Jim Nedelka regarding his visit to the Hus Church in the Czech village of Hvozdnice as a representative of New York City's John Hus Church. Jim and his wife, Holly, were among seventeen representatives from the PC(USA) who joined members of ECCB congregations in the Czech Republic for a partnership conference in October 2008.

During the first days, we begin interacting with representatives from our potential partner congregations in a way that is similar to first-year college students meeting their new dorm mates....

I wonder what shape a partnership between our two Jan Hus Churches will take, if one materializes! Despite being from opposite-sized communities, there seem to be few obstacles to a positive outcome. Both congregations are small in number; both have female pastors...; both have significant community outreach and social programs.... Thus, it is apparent that this is not a "mission trip" in a classical sense – the Hvozdnice congregants don't seem to "need" anything. Not only do they have the "means," they also seem to be much more "in the Spirit." Is a partnership necessary?



Participants in the October, 2008 Partnership Conference (Photo: Steve Hays)

The pastor speaks for her congregation, stating that a partnership will work only as a peer relationship; the Czechs' recent history mandates nothing less.... Her congregation has wrestled with the same questions about the nature of the potential partnership that we have discussed.... Yet, the church's leaders have made the decision to pursue partnership, no matter what form it takes.... They fully understand our "messenger" role...to listen, learn, and report back..., and we promise to be faithful messengers....

We perceive that in today's increasingly secular world..., ECCB churches

admittedly faces an up-hill climb in their efforts to spread God's message.... They estimate their 150,000 members to be approximately 1% of the total population of the Czech Republic. Yet, the ECCB is strong of faith and deep in commitment. By being in dialogue and sharing ideas with other Christians around the world, the leaders of the ECCB are seeking to learn and, perhaps, to teach. With ninety years of shared communion, the ECCB's desire to expand its relationship with the PC(USA) is natural and logical.

Likewise, for the PC(USA) – one of the many mainline Protestant denominations dealing with an eroding membership base and issues of how to spread God's message of love in this increasingly secular society – it seems logical to till the groundwork of the model partnership that has existed between the First Presbyterian Church of Annapolis, Maryland and the ECCB congregation in Letohrad since 2001. Any concept that can strengthen one's faith in God, one's church, one's denomination, and one's world is a concept worth pursuing.... For those considering walking the trail of partnership, these concluding thoughts from Alena Zikmundová should serve as sage advice:

Be open to people around you,
work where you are needed...,
and thank God.

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Look for another version of Jim's article and more images of, and information about, partnerships at: www.czechpartner.org or www.czechconnections.org. If your congregation has special interest in, or questions about, partnerships, you will find contact information in the "Invitation" section on the final page of this publication.



ECCB News, continued

■ New Leader at the Central Church Offices

On August 1, 2008, PhDr. Lydie Gallusová (born 1954) assumed the position of general secretary of the church's central offices. She came from being the executive editor of the Vltava-Labe-Press in Jihlava and Brno. She graduated from the Philosophical Faculty of Masaryk University in Brno with a degree in Romance Studies. She worked as a senior lecturer there, and later was employed as the head of a business firm in Brno.



Lydie Gallusová

Lydie Gallusová is from Sázava u Žďáru nad Sázavou, and has deep Protestant roots. She was born into the family of an ECCB pastor. Her father, Vladimír Doule, was the minister in Sázava for 21 years, and later served in Brno-Židenice. Both her son, Petr, and her sister, Ester, are clergy in ECCB congregations.

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■ **Resolution on Sexual Exploitation**

Declaration of the Synods of the ECCB and the EKD on the Topic of "The Sexual Exploitation of Women and Children in the Czech-German Border Region"

The 7th sitting of the 10th Synod of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) passed, as a resolution, the statement on the "Sexual Exploitation of Women and Children in the Czech-German Border Region," which had already been accepted by the Synod of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren in May 2008.

In the midst of today's unified Europe, there is a travesty, which not only the general public, but also the churches, willingly overlook. This is the distress of women and children who are railroaded into the sex industry by organized crime. Humiliated and abused, they live in slave-like conditions, illegally and anonymously, and for the most part, without personal culpability and with no hope of escape.

These problems, which have especially been concentrated along the Czech-German border, led the ECCB to call attention to this scandalous violation of human rights at the EKD's Synod in 2003. As the result of a decision by both churches, a joint Czech-German commission arose, which drew up a description and analysis of the current situation and suggested ways that the churches could help with this matter from the perspective of Christian ethical principles. The commission's final report was presented to the leaders of both churches.

The Synods of the EKD and the ECCB urge Christians in our churches and congregations to focus attention on this group of problems, which persists along the Czech/German borders.

We want the joint work of the ECCB and EKD to lead – by virtue of deep theological discussions within our churches – to increased sensitivity to these problems and to more intense cooperation, particularly among congregations in the border areas. We hope that this will contribute to more effective action against the sexual exploitation of children and women.

We are grateful to all of the institutions that are involved in this difficult problem area, whether they be governmental bodies or non-governmental organizations. We are committed to backing their work. We appeal to everyone who has responsibility in the church, the Diaconia, and the society to support this work, financially or in another appropriate way. We consider better Czech/German coordination of these activities to be important so that more efficient help and follow-up care can reach the afflicted persons.

We point out that human trafficking and sexual exploitation also go on in other places along the borders with neighboring countries, namely with Austria. We ask the responsible institutions to increase and coordinate their efforts to combat this evil. We call upon the governments of these nations to criminally prosecute the perpetrators.

We ask the European Commission and the European Council to vigorously expand and implement existing resources in the fight against human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

In light of the Czech Republic's presidium of the Council of the European Union in 2009, we consider this statement to be a demonstration of our churches' shared responsibility for a Europe in which human dignity and solidarity are valued, and human behavior is defined by justice and compassion.

Hannover/Bremen, November 5, 2008 ■
presseservice@ekd.de



■ **ECCB Clergy Couple desires to serve a PC(USA) congregation in 2011-12**

Our names are Martin and Gabriela Horák, and we both serve as pastors in the Czech Republic. We have three children; Klára is 8, Barbora is 6, and Dan is 4. Our daughters attend elementary school, and are interested in music and karate. Dan attends kindergarten, and is keen on castles and knights. All of them are learning English.

We live in the small town of Jilemnice, which is situated at the foot of the Krkonoše Mountains in the northern part of the country. Martin is the pastor of the ECCB congregation in Jilemnice, and Gabriela serves an ECCB congregation in the nearby village of Křížlice. That church is located in the mountains, so it is quite an adventure to work there in the winter.

Our congregations are autonomous, but we cooperate in many areas of our work. Our typical pastoral responsibilities include leading worship, teaching religion at two elementary schools, and providing Christian education for children. We also lead a youth group and adult bible studies. We offer pastoral care and spiritual guidance to our members and to others who are interested. We are also responsible for managing the church office, and we regularly organize workshops for families with small children and Christian summer camps for youth. We work with our elders to keep our congregations friendly and open to the public by inviting people in our area to concerts, lectures, and other programs.

Both of us are also involved in church activities beyond our congregations. Martin leads the Homiletic Training Course for vicars, and Gabriela leads their Pastoral Training Course.

We have been serving our churches for ten years, so before we are re-assigned, we would like to work in a different setting for a year. Gabriela did her Clinical Pastoral Education at Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester, NY, which is one of the reasons we would like to serve in the USA. We believe that this experience would enable us to bring new ideas back to our congregations, and would also enable us to contribute to the life of a Presbyterian congregation abroad. That is why we are looking for a full time job that we could share for a year. We could begin in September 2011.

Gabriela Horáková ■
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■ **My Path to Reconciliation**

This year, the Action Reconciliation Service for Peace (ARSP) is celebrating its fiftieth birthday. Guests from the Czech Republic also took part in the anniversary celebration in Berlin. Among these was Michaela Vidláková, the vice-president of Servitus. Along with Gerhard Frey-Reininghaus, she has led the ecumenical volunteer organization, SERVITUS, since June of this year. During a ceremony at the House of World Cultures in Berlin on May 2, she gave an account of her path to reconciliation. Here are some excerpts from her speech:

Most esteemed Mr. President, honored guests, dear friends!
Please notice how I just addressed you with the words, "Dear Friends!" because with these two words, even if I were not to say anything more, the most important thing would have already been said.

I, a Jew from Prague, who as a small child – like millions of other people – should have been exterminated by the Germans, and only by luck and with the help of God, survived the Holocaust – I stand here today in the heart of Germany in the presence of the president of

this country and I address you with the words, "Dear friends." That is already a sign that a lot has changed since then. However, whether two nations become reconciled does not only lie in the hands of the politicians because it is the people themselves who must become reconciled. Thus, instead of delivering a festive address, I will ask you to please permit me to tell about my own path to reconciliation and the most important milestones along the way, which have played a decisive role in the Reconciliation Service.

In my early childhood, I experienced living under the anti-Semitic measures within the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in my gut. Then, at the age of six, I was deported to the ghetto at Terezín, and only barely escaped death. At Terezín, I learned German quite well from a boy my age from Berlin with whom I lay in the sick-room for weeks with typhus. However, after being liberated, when I learned that this young German teacher, like nearly all of my friends and relatives, had been murdered so horribly in the gas chambers, I no longer wanted to utter a word of German. And I viewed and hated every German as being a deadly enemy.

Then, the years went by. I grew up, married, and became a mother. Yet, the pain and the hatred always remained with full strength.

In 1967, a group from ASF in West Berlin was in Prague, and I – I no longer know why – had to accompany them around the city. I went a long time without saying a single word of German. Then, a young woman named Erika Hahn, who was walking beside of me, told me everything she could about her motivation for being a member of ASF. After an hour, the dam was breached, and I started to speak German. Then, for the first time, I was ready to believe that there are other Germans besides Dr. Mengel and his like. That was my first contact, but there was no reconciliation yet.

Later, I had to meet my parents at the ASF Bureau on August Street in Berlin. And there, something very special happened. A white-haired man spoke to me, and when he learned that I was Luasch's daughter,

he entered into a longer conversation with me. I no longer know everything he said, but it was as if a quiet stream was washing over my brow. The man was Dr. Lothar Kreyszig. His personality – his charisma – convinced me that if, regrettably, we cannot change the past, the way of reconciliation is the best option for the future. (The little book that he gave me at that time, with its kind inscription, belongs among the treasures in my bookcase.)

After that turning-point, a lot changed. The first volunteer with us was Friedemann Bringt, and no one can imagine what he conveyed directly to the Holocaust survivors. Friedy imparted new hope – hope in the NEVER AGAIN – to them. Since then, volunteers come back every year, and are highly valued – and I will dare to say – well-liked and beloved.

We are among the last of those who are still able to give an account of that dark time. Therefore, what volunteers from ASF recently accomplished is very important for us. Artur Radvanský's memoirs were recorded on tape, and volunteers transcribed them word for word and adapted them for publication. Last year, his little book, which is entitled "Nevertheless, I Survived," appeared as a Goldenberg Publication for Radvanský's 85th birthday. Nearly all of the copies are already in the hands of German students and teachers.

Everything that has been expressed justifies my addressing you with the words "Dear friends." You see, these two words, which I spoke at the beginning, are truly the most important part of my speech!

Excerpted from the speech by Gerhard Frey-Reininghaus, President of Servitus
reininghaus@srcce.cz

News from the Diaconia

■ The Benefits of Assistive Technology: *An Interview with Pavel Vychopeň*

On October 23–24, a conference with the name "Assistive Technology and the Job Market" took place in Prague. Assistive technologies are often perceived to be too costly and difficult to understand. There are a variety of biases against their usefulness. Lack of information about technological feasibility and sources of funding for the necessary equipment also plays a role. However, much more is involved here. The implementation of assistive technologies is only one stone in a complicated mosaic called "integration into the job market." The goal of the conference was to explore technical, political, socio-economic, and psychological dimensions of the successful integration of people with disabling conditions into the job market, using assistive technologies. The Diaconia from Austria, the Diaconia of the ECCB, and the non-profit organization, Life Tool (which supports the research, development, and growth of AT), co-organized the fall conference. The main sponsor was the ERSTE Foundation. We will feature an interview with Rev. Pavel Vychopeň who was one of the organizers from the Diaconia of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren.

You have worked with the Diaconia of the ECCB for a number of years, and have also made use of your rich experience by working on international projects and in the field of international relationships. What exactly is the scope of your work today?



Mr. Miloš is able to work at the computer, thanks to "IntegraMouse," which makes it possible for him to activate all of the available functions of a standard computer mouse with his mouth. Clicking on the left or right button is produced by changing the force of the air in the mouth cavity and thus in the mouthpiece.

I worked at the Diaconia as its director for almost ten years. After a break, I recently returned at the invitation of the new director of the DECCB. Today, I am working as the coordinator of external relationships, especially those with English-speaking partners of the DECCB. In the future, a project being implemented in another country will occasionally be added to that. We are preparing a project in Romania, and are considering extending aid to orphaned children in Africa.

Along with the Diaconia from Austria, you are one of the organizers of the Prague conference on assistive technologies. Can you briefly describe this event for us, and explain the term Assistive Technology, its use and significance?

Today, the term AT is used to designate all types of software and hardware devices which should help people with a variety of disabilities or handicaps to better integrate themselves into life; for example, to get the chance to find suitable work or to increase the possibility for the meaningful use of time and its opportunities; in short, to achieve self-fulfillment.

For whom was the conference designed, and who should benefit from its results? What was its objective?

The conference made it a goal to facilitate a meeting of people from different spheres of society who are professionally engaged in helping people with disabilities. Representatives of non-governmental, non-profit organizations, which are involved in the fields of social services or health care, and people from various levels of the state administration, who have responsibility for these areas, came to Prague. However, there were also people present from research institutes that design and develop AT, as well as manufacturers of AT technologies.

At this time, are you able to gauge future developments in the level of international or European cooperation?

Naturally, every view of the future is something like a prophecy from a crystal ball. However, I believe that the October meeting in Prague may contribute to the formation of an extensive network of relationships among people from a variety of professions and a number of different countries, who will be linked by an interest in effectively helping the many disabled people who surely deserve our attention. AT is a useful tool for linking people who have the talent to create new things and those who have an open heart for others.

Interview by Daniela Řeháková ■
ECCB Diaconia
rehakovadiakoniecce.cz

asylum in our country, and this number continues to decline. However, more and more foreigners are seeking work and a new life in our country for economic reasons. In the last year, there have been around 400,000 of these. The number of foreigners without legal permission to live and work in the Czech Republic is also large; there are estimated to be between 100,000 and 200,000 such people.

At the Diaconia, we are trying to respond to the present needs of foreigners in the Czech Republic. The result has been the "Be a Neighbor" Project, which the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs has supported. Through this project, we mostly assist foreigners living in small towns and villages with integration into the new society by looking for new "neighbors" – partners – for them. We thereby make use of the resources of ECCB congregations that are located in many places throughout the Czech Republic. For the most part, we find the people in these congregations to be open to the needs of others, even if they come from someplace else and very often profess a different religion. The project helps people without regard to their faith. It does not have a "religious mission."

A part of the project is the organization of lectures or informal discussions about the foreigners' problems or about their culture and traditions, depending on what people display interest in. An asylum seeker of Chechen origin, who had lived in several refugee camps, works with us in hunting for lodging and work. As a result of her own experiences with people, she is able to shed light on many of the problems and pitfalls that foreigners in our country must face.



Photo: Jan Šilar

In addition to the "Be Neighbor" Project, the Diaconia is also engaged in work with "illegal immigrants." At the Czech Ministry of the Interior's facilities for detaining foreigners at Bělá pod Bezdězem, we are conducting a sewing workshop once a week. At the workshop, foreigners, who may be interned for up to half a year, can spend their free time meaningfully and can learn the fundamentals of sewing and creating simple styles. In the course of this work, we also take advantage of our cooperation with the ECCB. The Czech Ministry of the Interior does not reimburse us for the material used at the workshop, so we depend on congregations and individuals from the ECCB to send us fabric and sewing necessities.

At first glance, work with foreigners is somewhat beyond the classical scope of the Diaconia as an organization that is primarily devoted to senior citizens, people with disabilities, and persons in difficult life situations. However, foreigners in the Czech Republic are definitely in a difficult life situation. In addition to difficulties hunting for work and housing, they must face yet other problems related to distrust and prejudices that frequently border on xenophobia and racism. Yet, as our neighbors in need, they certainly merit our consideration and care.

Alena Fendrychová ■
Coordinator for Work with Foreigners, Diaconia of the ECCB
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■ **"Be a Neighbor"**

Assisting newcomers – foreigners – has a long a tradition in our church. Following the era of the relatively homogenous socialistic state, foreigners began to come to the Czech Republic, just like they did to the rest of the free European countries. At that time, the congregations of our church spontaneously helped with various waves of immigrants. People organized collections and went to refugee camps; some congregations housed refugee families in their midst, and so forth. The first coordinator for work with foreigners was able to draw upon the experiences of those congregations when she began her work at the Diaconia in 2001.

However, the current situation is noticeably different than it was twenty years ago. At the beginning of the new century when, in 2001 for example, 18,000 people applied for asylum in the Czech Republic, refugee facilities split at the seams. Last year, there were only 1,800 applicants for

■ Course for Hospital Chaplains at PTF

Pastoral care at medical facilities is not usually the norm in the Czech Republic. Whether such service is permitted, in what form, and to what degree generally depends on discussions with the administration of individual hospitals. Nevertheless, the Czech Bishop's Conference and the Ecumenical Council of Churches in the Czech Republic have already drawn up a joint agreement on regulations and standards for this work, in anticipation that it will increase.

With similar expectations, the Protestant Theological Faculty of Charles University in Prague recently organized a pilot course for hospital chaplains. It was undertaken with financial support from the European Social Fund and the Prague City Hall, and with the assistance of two of the university's medical faculties. Interest in the course exceeded expectations, so it was necessary to choose twenty participants from among the applicants. They came from different denominations, including the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches, and some of them had already had some training in that field. However, everyone had a lively interest in special schooling in this area, with



Course participants listen to lecture

a view to being able to devote themselves entirely to this work.

The course was the first of its kind. Thus, it used an experimental method, which was intended to test available content and methodology. In preparation, around ten thematic areas were set up (in part, by using models from other countries), covering questions of theological approach and various areas of medicine and patient care. Doctors from a variety of fields, psychologists, and theologians from different denominations took turns delivering lectures and leading discussions. During the year, the participants also completed a two-week internship at Prague hospitals that was led by experienced supervisors.

During the discussions, the question of the role of hospital chaplains in the particular case of the Czech population, where roughly only a third of the people have a Christian background, surfaced repeatedly. What is the specific function of pastoral care in contrast with the service of a psychologist or a crisis interventionist, for example? Or is it right to ask this question at all? It is generally held that a hospital chaplain may contact only those patients who desire a visit, or at least, who do not decline it. What expectations is it possible to have in this situation?

It would be foolish to suppose that a ten-month course could provide the answer to all questions and completely equip its participants for successful service as hospital chaplains. Several times, it was emphatically stated that there will never be a conclusive end to our professional and spiritual preparation; nevertheless, it was necessary to start at some point and to use these first steps to examine what may need to be pursued in the future.

This reference to "in the future" signifies that interest in the course was so high and the participants' evaluations were so positive that PTF plans to include this type of training in its regular curriculum for masters' level studies.

Pavel Filipi

Chair of the Department of Practical Theology, PTF
filipi@etf.cuni.cz

Briefly, from PTF

■ Martin Prudký Re-elected Dean

Associate Professor Martin Prudký completed his first term as Dean of the Protestant Theological Faculty (PTF) in September 2008, and has been re-elected for an additional four years by the Academic Senate of PTF, which consists of both teaching staff and students. Prudký, who heads PTF's Department of Old Testament Studies, will be assisted in his task of running the Faculty by the following team: Professor Pavel Filipi (Vice-Dean for Research and Postgraduate Studies), Associate Professor Jindřich Halama (Vice-Dean for Study Matters), Associate Professor Jiří Mrázek (Vice-Dean for Development), Dr. Jan Roskovec (Vice-Dean for International and Ecumenical Rela-



tions), Eva Svobodová, Bursar (Administrative and Financial Matters), Professor Jakub Trojan, and Associate Professor Petr Macek.

■ Visiting Professors in Prague

The Protestant Theological Faculty has a long tradition of extensive international contacts. The winter semester 2008 was characterized by an especially rich assortment of visiting professors. Our students were able to listen to lectures by guests from Thessaloniki, Leipzig, Bonn, Zürich, Cardiff, Wuppertal, and Marburg. In addition, two exchange seminars were held. One of these involved Erlangen, and other was with Leipzig. Students from both institutions spent one week together in Germany and another in Prague.

PROTESTANT THEOLOGICAL FACULTY CELEBRATES ITS 90TH ANNIVERSARY

This year marks the 90th anniversary of the founding of the Protestant Theological Faculty. The Faculty will commemorate this occasion on November 19-22, 2009 with a conference that will focus on the results of scholarship that has been done during the past few years on the theme of "Hermeneutics of the Christian, and in particular of the Protestant, Tradition in the Cultural History of Europe." There will also be a celebratory reception in the historical setting of Charles University and a meeting of the Association of Friends of the Faculty.

YOU ARE INVITED....
Do you have an article for Czech Mission Network News? Stories of partnership with the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren may be sent to jmauler@volny.cz.
Would your church like to have a special partnership with an ECCB congregation? If so, you may write to Betty McGinnis at cobe@comcast.net, Bill Hathaway at wlhfpc@annapolis-presbyterian.com, or Jon Chapman at jon.chapman@pcusa.org .
Thank you for considering these invitations.

EXTRA COMMITMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Our partner church could use our help with two important projects.

Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, Hospice

ECO account no. E051737

Goal: \$ 36,000

Category: Health Care/Christian Witness

Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, New Church Building and Partnership with Social Service Agency

ECO account no. E051738

Goal: \$ 23,000

Category: Church Construction, Witness and Service

For further information about these (and other) ECO projects in the Czech Republic, please contact the Area Coordinator for Europe and Ecumenical Councils at jon.chapman@pcusa.org or 888-728-7228 ext. 5324.

For on-line information and/or on-line giving, go to: <http://www.pcusa.org/give/online/default.jsp> and enter the ECO number in the "know the project number?" box

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PUBLICATION AND CONTACT INFORMATION

The Czech Mission Network is an ad hoc network of Presbyterians working with the PC(USA)'s World Mission to promote and maintain healthy and helpful partnership relations with the ECCB. **Visit the Mission Network's website** at www.czechconnections.org or communicate directly with the Network's convener, Jody Filipi, at jody@czechconnections.org.

Presbyterians do mission in partnership. Thus, much of the material in this newsletter first appeared in *Czech Protestant News*, a publication of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, and appears here by agreement.

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For more information about the work of that office, contact Jon Chapman, Director, at jon.chapman@pcusa.org or 888-728-7228 ext. 5324. Additional information about PC(USA)'s international mission involvements is available from:
World Mission, Presbyterian Church (USA),
100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, KY 40202-1396
www.pcusa.org

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