

...BRIDGES... Number 2, 2008: "CONNECTING"

by Joyce Michael for the ECCB's American Working Group & PC(USA)'s Czech Mission Network

Recently, I received an e-mail in which one of you wrote: "It sounds like some exciting things are happening." And so they are! In addition to preparations to host the PW's Global Exchange in September, a Partnership Conference in October, and a seminar for ECCB and PC(USA) pastors in 2009, I received three e-mails in one day, which revealed new interest and alerted me to yet other ways to build relationships between PC(USA) and ECCB congregations, groups, and individuals. Thus, if, according to our Czech partners, this is "the American year," 2009 may also have a strong component of PC(USA)/ECCB connections, reflective of a new level of relationship and commitment. It is also an exciting time because of wonderful e-mails that describe various Czech-related activities in which various PC(USA) congregations are already involved. I want to share some of these with you in this, and future, BRIDGES, so that these updates really can become the two-way path of communication that I originally envisioned.

"...Our annual Moravian Love Feast on Dec. 30, 2007 will have the added attraction of a mission report . . . on the historical background of the ECCB and how the PC(USA) is related to it in theology, governance, and mission ties. Members of Memorial Park PC (he's a "birth-rite Moravian" whose uncle currently is a bishop in that church) attended our service last year. Recently, she called to tell me that his cousin and wife who live in Bethlehem, PA, make all of the beeswax candles used by Moravians all over the country for their Love Feasts. The local couple has offered to give us authentic Moravian beeswax candles, onto which they will individually paste red, fireproof paper fringes. . . . Isn't that a gracious gift?"

Wilberta Pickett, Fox Chapel PC, Pittsburgh

"Members of Covenant Presbyterian Church, Columbus, Ohio, who visited the Czech Republic last July and October presented programs about their visits at two Sunday morning "Adult Forums." The first program had members telling about their travels, showing slides, and recalling their sense of awe at so much history, spanning such a long period of time, and such beautiful old buildings.

We described meeting for dinner with Czech friends, including Jan Dus and mission volunteer, Kati Salmons, from Polička. They talked about their work and showed slides of English classes that are providing church activities for unchurched people in their area.

We also told of visiting the Church of Milič z Kroměříže in Prague's Southern City district and of meeting with the pastor there.

This attractive new church building, which offered a strong contrast to the huge churches we had been seeing, is striving to introduce the residents of a nearby shelter for homeless families and blocks of high-rise apartments to the presence of God and the love of Christ.

The second program was given by two brothers, Kyle and Jon Davis, who shared an excellent slide show, while speaking about an international ECCB youth conference that they attended in 2007. They spoke of enjoying the city of Prague, the conference, the people they got to know, and hiking the mountainous terrain of eastern Bohemia where that camp is held. Both of the presentations enabled those who attended these Forums to have greater knowledge of, and appreciation for, what God is doing in the Czech Republic."

Helen Lowry, Covenant PC, Columbus

Relatedly, another member of Covenant PC writes: "I especially enjoyed visiting the church and hearing about its mission from the pastor. While I already knew how important it is to find out what people need and will actually use, his talk about the Roma people really made an impression on me. From now on, I will try to apply that principle before 'helping' someone by giving them what I think they need.

Janet Meunch, Covenant PC, Columbus

This is just the beginning of examples of practicing Czech traditions, sharing faith journeys, and being transformed that I want to offer you. May they encourage and inspire you to think of your own very best – and most fitting – ways of developing and fostering your Czech connections! Joyce M.