



MINUTE FOR MISSION

November 1, 2004

New Songs from the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren

New songs abound in the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (ECCB) these days! Nearly fourteen years have passed since the collapse of the communist regime, but the ongoing transformation of Czech society continues to present the PC(USA)'s partner church with new opportunities for outreach and service. Thus, a semi-annual publication titled Czech Protestant News



New songs abound in the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (ECCB) these days!

regularly contains more descriptions of emerging possibilities, established traditions, and present challenges than its eight-page format can hold. A revitalized Czech church wants to "let the whole world know" about the exciting ventures that are beckoning it. Nevertheless, one of the most vital ways that the church is extending the gift of Christian love often remains unheralded. It may be worthwhile to note that the quality of pastoral care, which is offered to people who are experiencing a sense of estrangement, is commendable in this society where pastoral activities were greatly restricted during the communist era.

In recent years, an artist who was tortured by a severe form of mental illness regularly found welcome and support at the home of an ECCB pastor who now teaches at the Protestant Theological Faculty. The woman eventually produced a series of paintings that she shared with Professor Kerkofsky, in which she depicted the struggles. Thus, other people have been given an opportunity to ponder the dark sides of human experience in a compelling way.



Likewise, prior to his untimely death in 2003, an especially beloved ECCB pastor regularly visited a major Czech psychiatric hospital and attracted a number of outcast men and women to his congregation. The Rev. Storek was not content to let the church languish in the sort of isolation that communist policy once dictated.

Furthermore, a pattern of genuine concern for people and unconditional acceptance of individuals is a fundamental aspect of a visionary project that is currently under way in a section of Prague known as "Southern City." A unique partnership has been formed between a social service agency, called the Walking Together Center, and an ECCB congregation, which is erecting a new church building adjacent to that shelter for women and children. Southern City is an extensive housing development, dating from communist times, where approximately 100,000 people live in close proximity. The Walking Together Center perceives that the witness of the church may remind people of what it takes to live in harmony, and the church's pastor envisions a very personal means of caring that will assure individuals that each of them is a worthwhile child of God. It is hard to imagine a better way to share a "new song" of hope and faith with isolated persons in a highly secularized milieu.

May it be so in Southern City and throughout the Czech Republic.

John and Joyce Michael
PC(USA) Mission Workers
Prague, Czech Republic

Do you have a mission story to tell? Would you like to read inspiring stories of Presbyterians in mission? Visit the Witness Season Web site: www.pcusa.org/witness. New minutes for mission are posted on the 1st and 15th of each month.

For more information on the Witness Season mission education emphasis contact Billie Healy, Associate for Mission Education Resources (888) 728-7228, ext. 5689, or Bhealy@ctr.pcusa.org.