

# News from Slovakia

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Dear Friends,

Hello from sunny Slovakia! That is not a phrase we have been able to use very often. The weather has been pretty dreary and cold for the past year, but we have had a glorious September – sunny and warm everyday. Everyone is taking the opportunity to spend as much time out of doors as possible, because we know that it can't last much longer.

We spent some time back in the U.S. this summer on home leave. We were in California (where David is from) and Kentucky (where Carla is from) and also participated in a couple of conferences in the Chicago and Massachusetts areas. Much of the time was extremely busy, but it was great to visit friends in different churches and to be with our family again. We returned to Slovakia refreshed and renewed.

Our church is off to a great start for the fall. Our attendance always dips during the summer as many of our people travel home or vacation in distant lands. Then it gradually builds up again during the fall, as people return and newcomers discover our congregation. This year we have broken this pattern. Our attendance has more than tripled since late August. The church is full every Sunday. There is a great spirit of excitement in worship, and each Sunday about a dozen new people arrive. This fall we have been making a particular effort to include hymns, songs, and worship styles from a variety of cultures and traditions. We are attempting to blend the styles so that there is something for everyone. This effort seems to be greatly appreciated.

Undoubtedly, the most exciting event in our congregational life this fall has been the installation of our new associate pastor, Josh Auchenbach. Josh has actually been in Slovakia for two years already, teaching religion with David at the Lyceum (the Lutheran high school). Having completed his ordination this summer, he now takes on this additional role. We had two bishops in attendance at the installation, Bishop Wilma Kucharek, of the Slovak Zion Synod in the U.S., and Bishop Julius Filo, General Bishop of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession (the name for the Lutheran Church here in Slovakia). It was a very festive, exciting service, and another important milestone in our church's history. David and Josh are already enjoying this partnership in ministry and the church is experiencing some wonderful new energy as a result.

Carla is carrying on the continuing task of cataloging the theological collection at the seminary library. Her American colleague, Leroy Bradway, ended his term there this summer. Only she and her Slovak colleague, Jan Badura, remain to finish the job, and if all goes well, even Jan may leave the seminary library for a time. One of Carla's main projects in recent weeks has been to help Jan with his application to go to library school in Chicago. If he is approved for an ELCA scholarship and accepted at the library school, he will most likely begin his studies in the fall of 2007 and will attend for two years. His completion of this program would help to ensure that a Slovak national is equipped to continue the work here at the Lutheran seminary library when the ELCA no longer supplies a librarian.

As we have described in the past, each year the ELCA sends out a number of English teachers to teach at the Lyceum and two other Lutheran high schools in Slovakia. The new teachers arrived in late August. Both David and Carla helped to provide leadership at the orientation for the new teachers. Together with Josh and Josh's wife, Olga, we also spent a lot of time setting up apartments for the teachers and making many other preparations. Everyone has now settled in well, and we are very impressed with this new group of missionary volunteers. Many of them are also very active at volunteering in our congregation, and have helped us to add a lot of musical variety to our services.

This year the Lyceum (the school where David teaches) is celebrating its 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Not many institutions can claim to have brought quality Christian-oriented education to a culture for so long. The new school year began in early September. David is once again enjoying teaching religious studies for a new group of over seventy students. Carla is also spending time at the Lyceum's English library, doing some of the technical work that the volunteers are unable to do. At the beginning of each school year David has his new students fill out a questionnaire, asking them to share a little bit about their background and their hopes for the class in the coming year. That answers often illustrate the challenges facing the church and Christian people in this post-communist society. One student states, "Both of my parents are atheists and also all of my grandparents. Only me and my sister do believe in our Lord." Another student comments, "I would like to know how to defend my faith." It is a great privilege to be able to share the Christian faith with these future leaders of Slovakia, and by God's grace, hopefully to strengthen and grow that faith in these young people's lives.

We close this update with a couple of prayer requests. First of all, please pray for the Slovak Lutheran Church. For the first time in many years, a new national bishop has been elected and will be taking office at the end of October. Because the church is still dealing in many ways with issues that arose from the years of oppression under the communist system, this change is causing a considerable amount of anxiety. Please pray for the new leadership, that the new Bishop, his staff, and the church as a whole may move forward with vision and hope.

Finally, we ask you to pray for our son, Paul and his wife, Stephanie. In August they moved to Kenya to begin a year of missionary service for the ELCA at an orphanage in the city of Nyeri. Pray for blessings on their work and for their safety during the year. Please pray for our family as we are spread out this year over three continents (our other son, Christian, lives in California).

Thank you for your ongoing prayers and support. We are grateful to God for the partnership we have with you in bringing the good news of Jesus Christ to Slovakia and the world.

Love in Christ,  
David and Carla Schick

P.S. If you or your congregation plans to send us donations of green hymnals (LBW's), blue songbooks (With One Voice), books for the seminary, or any other resource, please contact us first by email. The person who has been receiving the books for us will be moving, most likely within a couple of months. We may have to give you a different address, depending on how soon you would be able to mail the books. Thanks!