



Veselé Vianoce! (That is Slovak for "Merry Christmas!")

December 16, 2005

Dear Friends,

Greetings from Bratislava. We hope you are all having a blessed Advent as you prepare to celebrate Christ's birth this Christmas.

Snow is falling, the cold winter winds are blowing, but we are doing well. It has been a very busy December at our congregation, Bratislava International Church. Attendance in both worship and Sunday School has been growing steadily for the last few months. We have had a number of special services, baptisms, and other occasions. Last Sunday morning the children of our church put on a beautiful Christmas presentation during the morning service, complete with little dancing angels. That evening some of our British members helped organize and put on an "English Family Carol Sing." We sang songs of the season and heard holiday poems, stories, and readings from an international group of presenters that included everyone from children of the church to the newly appointed U.S. ambassador to Slovakia. The day ended as we shared some holiday treats and great fellowship. Many commented on the wonderful sense of community we experienced throughout the day. We have such a great group of people that have joined us since the fall began, and we have picked up a large number of young families. The result is that we now run out of hymnals most Sundays, and we're trying to find a larger meeting space for our Sunday School. These are good "problems" to have, and we are grateful to God for the excitement and vitality we are experiencing in our church.

Our connections to the Slovak church continue to grow as well. David has preached and shared music in a couple of special services for the Slovak youth during the last couple of months. The regular Sunday afternoon Slovak youth services have been growing tremendously and are attracting many new young people.

A big part of our role here is to help people who are far from home to feel like they still have a family. This is, of course, especially important during holidays. During the Thanksgiving holiday Carla was in charge of organizing a large Thanksgiving meal and celebration for almost 60 missionaries, teachers, and support staff serving in this part of the world. For the first time this annual dinner took place up at the seminary where Carla works. It proved to be a wonderful site, and the great food and warm fellowship were appreciated by all.

We have now been in Slovakia a little over a year and a month. Even with all of the good friends we have made and the great activities that have been taking place, it is hard to be so far away from those we love this time of the year. We are really feeling the distance from home this holiday season, and we are especially missing our two sons this Christmas. Your love support and prayers mean so much to us as we carry on our work and life here.

We are grateful for all the newsletters, cards, and letters of support that we have received from so many of you. We pray also that we will be good stewards of your gifts, and we pray that God will bless you for your generosity and for your prayers. You are all in our prayers as well. May the blessings of the one who was born in Bethlehem be with you this Christmas and in the year to come.

Together in Christ's Service,
David and Carla Schick