



*Merry Christmas
from David and Carla*

December 17, 2006

Dear Friends and Family,

Greetings from Bratislava! Two thousand years ago God surprised our world with the gift of his presence in the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem. Matthew 1:22-23 tells us this about the birth:

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"--which means, "God with us."

We hope that you are all living in the reality and the joy of the meaning of Christ's birth – God with us!

The sights, sounds, and activities of Christmas are all around us here in Bratislava. The Christmas market is in full swing down at the central town square, and the town is decorated very beautifully. At our Lyceum school this coming Wednesday all the missionary teachers from America will be invited to help prepare Kapustnica, the traditional soup always prepared for Christmas here in Slovakia. Then on Thursday a Kapustnica party will take place. (Kapustnica means 'sauerkraut soup.')

The approach of Christmas has also been very evident at our church. We have had a number of wonderful special activities this year. A holiday carol sing was held last Sunday, and this Sunday the children of our church presented their Christmas program. Tomorrow evening, we will offer a special choir concert in the British Tradition called "The Service of Nine Lessons and Carols." Money raised at that concert will be used to support our growing refugee ministry. Christmas Eve services are, of course, only a week away. Something special will be happening during the morning service on Christmas Eve, when one of our Jr. High youth will be baptized. This is the first of a number of baptisms that will happen in the next month. David has been working with an international group of youth, some of whom will be baptized, and all of whom will be having their Confirmation in January.

We have now been in Slovakia a little over two years. The time has gone by so quickly. We appreciate your ongoing support and prayers during that time. A big part of our role here is to help people who are far from home feel as if they still have a family nearby. This is, of course, especially important during the holidays. Thanks for helping us also to feel less isolated from home through your greetings, cards, gifts, calls, and letters of support. Pray for us and for the many others here in Slovakia who will spend Christmas far from home. Please remember especially one of our African refugees (whose name is Christian), who just lost his 14-year-old brother to cancer. Pray also that we may be effective at the schools in which we work. Pray that our congregation will continue to grow and do a good job of reaching out to people in this city. And finally, please pray for the Slovak nation, that it may continue to meet the ongoing challenges it is facing as a post-communist country. Your love and prayers really are making a difference for us and for this place.

We wish you a very Merry Christmas and God's blessings in the New Year.

David and Carla