

Czech Protestant News

A Bulletin of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren,
the Diaconia of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren,
and the Protestant Theological Faculty of Charles University

Ecumenical Bulletin 45 – Advent 2018

Editorial

Dear Readers,

Years ending in eights have often marked significant events, not only in the European, but also in the global context. However, especially the Czech Republic has many anniversaries ending in eights, anniversaries that are of great importance to our history. This also applies to 2018.

50 years have passed since 1968, the year that began with the promising “Prague Spring” and ended in total despair after the occupation of the Soviet army and the armies of the Warsaw Pact.

There is another 50-year anniversary we would like to draw attention to. It does not have an eight at the end, but it is closely related to 1968: in January 1969, Jan Palach, a university student, set himself on fire in front of the National Museum, at the top of Wenceslas Square. His act was an act of protest against the peoples’ lack of will and gradual adaptation to the situation, the lethargy that set in in the months following the occupation.

I would like to finish this editorial with a more encouraging piece of history to commemorate: 100 years have passed since the end of WWI, and also since the founding of Czechoslovakia with our first President, T.G. Masaryk; it has also been 100 years since the founding of our Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, which is certainly a reason to celebrate! You’ll find an article about the ECCB’s centenary at the very beginning of our Bulletin.

We should, however, keep in mind what our Synodal Senior said at the ECCB’s centenary celebrations in Pardubice: “What’s a hundred years from a higher perspective?” Well put, right? Advent is coming. May the Christmas message bring us hope and support. In the busy weeks before Christmas, let us not forget the utmost source of joy and encouragement, true peace that surpasses our understanding.

With best wishes



Jana Plíšková

EVANGELICAL CHURCH OF CZECH BRETHERN (ECCB)

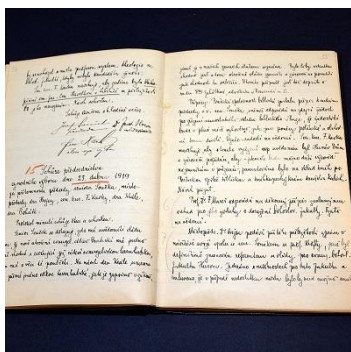


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The foundations of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren stem from the Hussite church (1431–1620) and the Unity of the Brethren (1457–1620). The Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (ECCB) was established in 1918, when the Lutheran and Calvinist wings of the local protestant creed were united in one. Their existence, however, had not been legal until Joseph II issued his Patent of Toleration in 1781, following a long and tough anti-reformation campaign that began in 1620. Even after issuing the Patent of Toleration, Protestants still had to face many restrictions, which would only be lifted following the Protestant Patent of 1861.

At the time of its establishment, the ECCB had 250,000 members, the number increased to 325,000 in 1938. Today, the church is divided into 14 seniorates and has a total of approximately 250 congregations and 100,000 members. The church is headed by a six-member Synodal Council, elected for a six-year period, represented by the Synodal Senior and Synodal Curator.

One-Hundred-Year Anniversary



The developments of the First World War were clearly leading to the defeat of the Austro-Hungarian coalition and the collapse of the Monarchy was inevitable. The political and constitutional-law changes led to the separation from the Viennese church administration, which enabled Czech Protestants to start taking certain steps. The long-desired union of the two largest Protestant churches – of the Augsburg and the Helvetic confessions – was within reach. Experiencing the euphoria from the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian empire and rejoicing in the vision of a free Czech state, any obstacles that might arise seemed easy to overcome.

On 16 May 1917, the representatives of the Czech Protestants met in secret and, following the speeches of Josef Souček and Josef Hromádka, issued the following statement: “The Czech Protestants feel an earnest need and desire to establish an independent Czech national Protestant church, walking in the footsteps of the Czech reformation, and on this basis, to create a union of the current historical Czech churches.” The possibility of joining the new church sparked great interest among several thousand Czech-speaking Protestants in Silesia, who saw this as an opportunity to free themselves from the oppression they had been subjected to as a national minority both in Polish and in German churches.

The founding of Czechoslovakia on 28 October 1918 brought with it the reorganization of Protestant churches and their Central Committee finally agreed to summon a general assembly that would declare the union of the two churches, based on the Czech confession and the Confession of the Brethren.

The Founding General Assembly was summoned for Tuesday 17 December 1918, nine o'clock, at the Smetana Hall of the Municipal House in Prague. The speeches of the representatives of both confessions were naturally full of pathos: words of gratefulness for the liberation of the nation were pronounced, with President T. G. Masaryk portrayed as the instrument of God's righteousness. At the same time, the Protestant ideals of democracy, freedom and responsibility were praised. The last resolution was read by Ferdinand Hrejsa and Antonín Frinta: the Protestant churches of the Augsburg and the Helvetic confessions are now united in one.

However, long before the ECCB was established, students of theology came up with the idea of creating a religious and cultural centre in Prague, under the name of Jan Hus. They were hoping this plan could be carried out at the occasion of the 500th anniversary of Hus's burning at the stake.

Proposals for building purchases were put forward as early as 1902 but, in the end, the two-storey building in Jungmannova street turned out to be the most advantageous choice. By this time, however, only three years were left until the Jan Hus celebrations of 1915, when the Hus house was originally intended to open. Although the house was already purchased, it was not ready for use, as there were still tenants in it and there was not enough room for the planned purposes. However, there was a large court adjacent to the house and this was where the real Hus House was to be built.

In October 1918, a hall for 200 people and a library with a reading room were constructed. The house also served as the seat of the Constance Union and the editorial office of the "Constance Sparks" magazine. Following the union of the Protestant churches toward the end of the year, the Synodal Committee and its departments set up their offices in the house. In June 1923, the reconstruction began. Based on architect Bohumír Kozák's project, three storeys were added to the original building and the front façade was decorated with a statue of Jan Hus by Ladislav Kofránek, reliefs of the Bible and the Lamb, as well as inscriptions. The front building of the Hus House was opened on 1 May 1924. The construction of the building in the court was decided on in 1934 and B. Kozák was again chosen as its architect. The new court building was opened on 14 March 1937.

Celebrations of the 100th Anniversary

A festival of concerts, discussions, theatre plays, films, as well as prayer and quiet reflection time took place in Pardubice from 27 to 30 September. The celebrations of the 100th birthday of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren were attended by all generations.

All sorts of programmes were held on Friday – discussions took place on the topics of God and faith, life as an active citizen, the role of churches in society, minorities, migration, or social work. Serious discussion issues were interspersed with concerts, films, creative workshops; fun activities were also provided for children.

The focal point of the celebrations was the open-air service that took place on Saturday, 29 September. The ECCB's Synodal Senior, Daniel Ženatý, preached from the stage that was set up on Pardubice's Pernštýn Square. The service was broadcast live by Czech Television.

Saturday's programme then continued at four other places in Pardubice. Visitors had the possibility of attending concerts, lectures, exhibitions, workshops, films, or morning and evening prayers. The ECCB's Diaconia, as well as major Protestant schools, also had a chance to present their projects and work. The Chamber Orchestra of the Evangelical Academy's Conservatory accompanied the morning service and then gave an afternoon concert in the park.

The Pardubice celebrations represented the largest, most visible event of the ECCB's 100th anniversary. It was attended by church members from all over the Czech Republic, the general public, as well as ecumenical guests both from the Czech Republic and abroad. The estimated number of visitors was two to three thousand. The ECCB has issued several publications on this occasion.

In mid-December of this year, the celebrations of the ECCB's 100th anniversary will continue with an international conference that will take place at the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic and

with a ceremonial gathering of the ECCB at the Smetana Hall of the Municipal House in Prague, i.e. the place where the ECCB was established one hundred years ago, almost precisely to the day. At present, the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren is the largest Protestant (non-Catholic) church in the Czech Republic. Famous Czech Protestants include, among others, T. G. Masaryk, Milada Horáková and Jan Palach.

Adéla Rozbořilová, Daniela Ženatá

Memorandum Signed with Václav Havel Airport



Prague airport has launched a cooperation with the Ecumenical Council of Churches with the aim of providing spiritual support to passengers, their relatives, and airport employees in crisis situations such as natural disasters, aircraft accidents or terrorism.

Chaplains will be available to provide pastoral and spiritual care to people of any confession at such times. The memorandum was signed by Václav Řehoř, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Václav Havel International Airport Prague, Daniel Ženatý, Chairman of the Ecumenical Council of Churches, and Petr Jan Vinš, its General Secretary.

“Spiritual support should complement the services of a psychologist which are already available at the Prague Airport in crisis situations. Although these are generally very rare in air travel, we must be very well prepared in case they should occur. This cooperation will ensure that our passengers and employees have access to excellent care in all aspects of travel,” said Václav Řehoř.

Jiří Hofman

Film and discussion evenings on „Famous Protestants“



totalitarianism.

In the centennial anniversary of the establishment of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, the Czech state commemorates 100 years since the end of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and the foundation of the independent republic. Czech Protestants have been associated with the modern history of the country from the very beginning. Even now, they are known as prominent statesmen, thinkers, human rights defenders, or opponents of communist

For three autumn evenings, these figures were remembered by the visitors to the Václav Havel Library in the centre of Prague. Three film evenings, including a discussion with guests, took place here.

The first Czechoslovak President Tomas Garrigue Masaryk was featured in September with a documentary film and unique 100-year-old clips from the National Film Archive. In the light of his protestant faith, his relationship with the family, and his university work, he was then discussed in a session led by the Deputy Director of the National Museum, Michal Stehlík.

During the October meeting, visitors could see authentic shots from the fabricated political process concerning Milada Horáková. In 1950, representatives of the Communist regime accused her of high treason and in the manipulated trial in front of the lens of propaganda cameras sentenced her to death.

The courageous protestant Milada Horáková has become a symbol of resistance to the totalitarian rule of the Communist Party, as well as an example of incredible personal bravery and devotion to truth. Dana Musil, a historian, narrated her story at the talk.

In November, the participants recalled the legacy of a young philosophy student, Jan Palach, who burned himself to death in January 1969 to protest against the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia. His funeral became a national demonstration, and 20 years later, the so-called Palach Week launched a wave of demonstrations culminating in the famous Velvet Revolution. Palach has been remembered in a new film, filmed in his home church. The current Synodal Senior, Daniel Ženatý, portrayed the then Palach's minister, Jakub S. Trojan. The discussion was attended by the film's lead actor, Viktor Zavadil, and by the historian Jakub Jareš.

The three film-discussion evenings were received with great interest; the hall was always filled to capacity, and the number of participants in all three evenings was close to four hundred.

Jiří Hofman

Two Brand New Schools Are Becoming a Reality, a Third One is Planned

The Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren has founded six schools and another one is about to open in



Brno. We boast a conservatory in Olomouc, we are proud of the graduates of our medical school, of our secondary schools and vocational universities with a focus on social work, and we are happy to watch the progress of the children at the School of the Brethren, so far the only elementary school. Our schools are unique in their family-like atmosphere and in the fact that they also give extra attention to students with problems. Inspections usually evaluate the ECCB's schools as successful, as graduates tend to find jobs

easily. This may seem like a drop in the ocean of Czech schools; but we are glad to be able to make this small contribution to the Czech education system. Two of our schools have been striving for years to increase their student capacity and safeguard their existence by constructing new buildings which comply with current tuition standards. The number of people interested in placing their child in one of the ECCB's schools is currently higher than the number of students the schools are able to accept.

Evangelical Academy in Prague

Based on the decision of the last Synod, which approved the construction of a new building for the Evangelical Academy, the Synodal Council confirmed its intention to purchase an appropriate plot of land in Prague-Modřany. Architect's plans were prepared and a building permit was finally granted, following many negotiations. The realistic date for the final inspection and opening of the new building is the end of 2019.

School of the Brethren

The management of the ECCB also discussed the construction of a new building for the School of the Brethren at a plot of land close to the current location of the school in Prague-Holešovice, where their current building is occupied under a lease. If everything works out as planned, the school could finally provide secondary education, and acquire a gym and a cafeteria. At the time of the session of this year's Synod in Litomyšl, the children from the school of the Brethren came for a trip, to present themselves to the local citizens as well as to the members of the Synod. They presented an entertaining

programme in the monastery gardens with the aim of drawing attention to the school's need for more teaching space. This would also bring more possibilities for the students' personal development, and thus for the development of our society as a whole.

Funding for both schools

The Synod has approved the proposed funding for both schools. Apart from the funds gained by selling one of the buildings of the Theological Faculty, the proposal also counts on contributions from Diaconia's projects and development projects, which should serve, along with an appropriate rent, to gradually repay the intra-church loan. Fundraising activities should also help produce the necessary funds.

Planned "Filipka" Elementary School in Brno

The construction of another elementary school is planned in the second largest city of the Czech Republic – Brno. A group of enthusiastic teachers is prepared to fill the classrooms with elementary school students in September 2019, provided that the necessary Ministry permit is gained and the rented building undergoes the needed renovations.

We hope that all our schools become, more than ever, centres of community life and other civic activities, promoting the good name of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren among Czech citizens.

Daniela Ženatá

Partnerships and Partners



Over many years, the ECCB has been involved in partnerships between congregations. These have involved partners in the Netherlands (there was once a great number of these), with Switzerland, with Germany, with Scotland, and with the United States of America. (There may be some I have missed!)

Such partnerships have had many facets to them, and each one is different. Some have grown from personal friendships between ministers; some have involved the sharing of musical skills and enthusiasms; some have focussed on help with summer camps of various kinds. Many have involved visits in both directions, a chance to walk more obviously in someone else's shoes, walk someone else's ways, learn another set of customs, perhaps a slightly different way of thinking, or different ways of worshipping. Occasionally – especially, perhaps, in the past – partnership has involved the reception of financial help for a particular project.

At one time in Scotland, where I come from, people did not leave their town except when there was a church trip. One congregation where Mary and I were members remembered the days when such an outing involved hiring not a bus but a whole train, so that people who never went anywhere could widen their horizons – even if only by a few miles.

That might have been true once for church partnerships: they provided opportunities for travel that people could not manage any other way; and perhaps today more people travel more often on their own than they ever did in the past. This could then lead us to think that the days of partnerships is over, no longer necessary. Whether or not they are still necessary (and you could argue that either way), they are still an important part of our church life.

The truth is that we still benefit from having our horizons broadened; the church still benefits from encounters that take its members beyond their normal paths. It is still the case that we as individuals, our parishes, and our churches, are enriched by encounter with the members of the body of Christ in other parts of God's world.

So, while some partnerships come to an end – because partnerships rarely last for ever, others are being created. They are created sometimes because individuals have a vision of meeting and gather others into that vision and onto that road. Some new partnerships are being created at a 'whole church' level, so the ECCB now has a partnership with the LaCrosse Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA).

Our Synodal Senior, Daniel Ženatý, visited the United States earlier this year with Oliver Engelhardt, Head of the Ecumenical Department, and Štěpán Brodský from Diakonie. There they formally signed a covenant with the LaCrosse Synod. And Daniel Ženatý went on to visit the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA) and also went to Texas, where new contacts were made, and new possibilities discovered. Today there are congregations here looking for such possibilities; and there are congregations from elsewhere (Texas, Scotland, Rheinland) looking to make new friends here.

Next April, In Atlanta, there will be held the latest in a series of partnership conferences between the ECCB and the PCUSA. It will be a chance to renew old friendships and explore new roads, an opportunity to confirm and renew, to challenge, and maybe even to change. We expect at least twelve people from the ECCB to attend. This time the two 'original' churches will be joined by some others – from the ELCA and possibly also the Church of Scotland.

The tent of the covenant is a large tent, and participation in partnership is a broadening reality. In the words of the American spiritual, 'there's room for many a more'.

David Sinclair

The Cost of Freedom. 50th anniversary of the death of Jan Palach



On the 16th of January 1969, to protest against the widespread apathy that took hold of Czechoslovak citizens following the country's occupation by the armies of the Warsaw Pact, the young student Jan Palach set himself on fire at a public place in the centre of Prague, in front of the National Museum.

His act set in motion a wave of solidarity and civic activity, the funeral was attended by hundreds of thousands of people. In the ensuing two decades of the communist dictatorship, the anniversary of Palach's death became the symbol of fighting for freedom and democracy. The protests culminated half a year before the fall of the communist regime, in January 1989, when thousands of people spent seven days

demonstrating in Wenceslas Square.

Today, Jan Palach's legacy is acknowledged by all democratic organisations and individuals. We are proud that Palach's name was linked not only with the Charles University, but also with our church, the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren.

Ondřej Lukáš

Petr Kratochvíl elected as member of the Governing Board of the Conference of European Churches



In June, the General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) elected a new President: Christian Krieger of the Reformed Protestant Church of Alsace and Lorraine. The Governing Board also has a Czech representative, Petr Kratochvíl of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren. Regional and confessional aspects are taken into account in the election: the official regulations require for at least a quarter of the members to come from orthodox or oriental churches. There is also certain quota determining the percentage of women, youth and lay members in the list of

candidates.

Christian Krieger has set two main goals for his five-year presidency: "The first aim is to build closer relationships between churches in Europe. I want to strengthen their mutual dialogue and give them more opportunities to meet. The second aim is the testimony of churches in Europe and for Europe. This also includes more involvement in social issues, issues of economic justice, taking care of migrants and so on," Mr Krieger said in his candidate speech.

The seventeen elected members of the Governing Board also include one Czech representative: Petr Kratochvíl of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, who was the common nominee of all the six Czech churches that are members of the CEC. Petr Kratochvíl works as the director of the Institute of International Relations. Petr Jan Vinš of the Old Catholic Church, who is currently the General Secretary of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in the Czech Republic, was elected as one of the substitutes.

Press Release of the Ecumenical Council of Churches

God loves foreigners



Jesus as a fugitive. Migrant Sarah and migrant Abraham. Joseph in the hands of human traffickers. Economic migrant Ruth. The Lord as a guest. And what about those who are on their way, on the run or in a foreign country today?

These are the paintings that the exhibition called "God Loves foreigners" presents to us. Its primary purpose is to present the biblical concept of hospitality - love for the incomers, guests and foreigners (philoxenia). It asks about our relationship to the people on the run and to asylum seekers and it takes the biblical texts that concern them. It tells the stories of various biblical characters and

describes their experience on the journey away from home, the experience of being foreign. How does the Bible look at foreigners, solidarity or hospitality? Do we have aliens to welcome or just to tolerate? Is it to host them, or just to help them survive? People on the run have disappeared from newspaper headlines but have not disappeared from the walls of Europe or its countries. They are still looking for a place to live. The exhibition shows that if there is really (so often misused) the phrase 'Christian values', then one of those values definitely concerns the kind of care we provide for foreigners, especially those in a difficult life situation.

Inspiration from our neighbours in Austria

The Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren prepared the exhibition in cooperation with the Austrian Bible Society, with the support of the Czech-German Future Fund and Gustav-Adolf-Werk e.V. In addition to Germany, it was also presented in Hungary, Romania and France, but originally in Austria. Here it was created in 2012 by the Austrian Bible Society, which kindly let us create a Czech version free of charge.

The exhibition is in the form of 12 large-format posters (80x200 cm). Each poster contains photos, pictures, and Bible verses on the subject and a text on theme of a biblical experience of alienation (in Czech and German). From the first to the last panel, the visitor symbolically goes all the way from the decision to leave home, through the distressful journey, to the problems associated with entering a new environment.

Since October, the exhibition has been visiting the churches of ČCE and will be available to schools and other interested parties throughout the Czech Republic. It also wants to bring a Christian voice to the Czech public debate. In a situation where we are confronted on a daily basis with the rejections voiced by political representatives, and quick solutions with zero tolerance, we as Christians, have to hear and show what the emphases and challenges of the Bible are.

The ceremonial opening of the exhibition took place on September 26th in the ECCB church Prague-Střešovice and there was also a discussion with people who have experience with migration or of being refugees.

In the evening, musicians from Syria and Uzbekistan provided accompanying performances, and there were typical foreign specialties provided: Ukrainian borscht, stuffed pies or bread based on Iraqi recipes. Everything was prepared by foreigners who once found shelter in the Střešovice church and gradually became their members or friends.

The Synodal Council issued a statement in July 2018 on the situation of refugees in the Czech Republic, expressing concern about the attitude of the Czech government. Specifically, there was at that time a group of 450 people who were stuck in a fishing boat near the Italian shores. The Czech government, based on the Prime Minister's words in July this year, will not meet the urgent demands of Italy and will not help any of the migrants.

An extract from the statement reads: "By its rejection, the Czech Republic is betraying the principles of the civilized world, of which it wants to be a part and which, among other things, is based on the tradition and values of the Christian faith. We are convinced that our country is able to cooperate effectively with other European partners and institutions against economic migration and organised human trafficking. At the same time, we trust governmental and non-governmental organisations, and we believe that our society has enough self-confidence, moral strength and effective tools to support those in need.

Jesus' words about helping a fellow in need are clearly expressed in the Gospel. Faced with immediate threats to real people, we must not remain disdainful and indifferent.

Michael Pfann, Jiří Hofman

Former Synodal Senior Passes Away



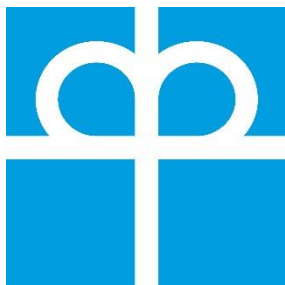
On Thursday, 4 October 2018, the former Synodal Senior and pastor of the ECCB, Pavel Smetana (1937–2018), died.

He started his career as an assistant preacher in Louny and, following a two-year military service, he took the job of a pastor in Hošťálková, a village in Moravian Wallachia, in 1964. After fifteen years, he left to become the pastor of the Prague-Libeň congregation, where he stayed until 1991.

In 1987, he was elected Deputy Synodal Senior, and when the Synodal Senior at the time was elected as member of the “National Understanding Government”, Mr Smetana became Head of the ECCB. In 1991, he was elected Synodal Senior and remained in this position for two electoral periods, until 2003. Between 1995 and 2000, he was also President of the Ecumenical Council of Churches of the Czech Republic. In 2002, Václav Havel decorated him with the T. G. Masaryk Medal.

With his wife Zdena, they brought up three daughters – Ester, Magdalena and Pavla. They spent their well-deserved retirement years in Prague and also regularly travelled to visit their daughters Magdalena and Pavla, living with their husbands in Gruibingen, Germany, and on the Greek island of Corfu. They also enjoyed resting at their country house by the Seč dam.

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The Diaconia of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (ECCB) is a Christian non-profit organisation that offers help and support for living a dignified and full life despite age, illness, disability, isolation, difficult social situations or other forms of crisis situations that occur in life. The services of the ECCB's Diaconia are based on the message of the Gospel about the Love of our Lord and the example that Jesus Christ has given us in serving others. In its centres and special educational facilities, the ECCB's Diaconia offers social and educational services, healthcare, and ministry. It is the second largest non-governmental organisation providing social services in the Czech Republic.

The ECCB has collected 1 million CZK for the refugees helped by the ECCB's Diaconia



In this year's Easter edition of the Ecumenical Bulletin, we reported about the help that Diaconia has been providing at the refugee camp in Zátarí, Jordan. A Lent collection was taking place in the ECCB's congregations at the time, the proceeds of which were designated for the people at this camp. 1 million Czech crowns were raised in the collection, also thanks to our partners from the United States (Diaconia Connections). The funds from this collection will help enlarge the "Peace Oasis", the Diaconia centre at the Zátarí camp.

This will give the inhabitants of the camp more room for meeting with people, as well as space for specific aid programmes organised by Diaconia in cooperation with other organisations. In addition to this, a playground is being constructed for the local children, protected from the sharp desert sun, providing swings, slides and climbing frames.

The ECCB's Diaconia helps prepare people with disabilities, even those with alcoholic dementia, for work



Diaconia's centre in Valašské Meziříčí runs (among other things) two clothing stores and a cleaning company. This autumn, a chocolate-candy producing factory has been added to the list. The trouble is, not all workers are able to keep their job, especially those with a learning disability. They are often unable to handle all the demands of the job, such as working independently, and decide to quit, despite being skilled and motivated. Diaconia's centre in Valašské Meziříčí is now striving to find ways to help these people keep their jobs.

It has turned out that the weakest point is actually the very beginning, as nobody has time to train people with special needs: explain all the things they need to keep track of and watch out for, and supervise them afterward to make sure this is really happening. Diaconia in Valašské Meziříčí has therefore launched its own work-training programme, called Matteo.

Plant and you shall see

A dozen people are strolling around a forest clearing, collecting branches and stacking them into two large piles. The majority are older-looking men, most of whom suffer from some type of alcoholic dementia. They often have serious problems with short-term memory, some also with motor skills. All of them live in the nearby town of Pržno, in a special-regime home. They need help and supervision by specialised staff on a daily basis, but there are many activities they are able to do independently.

This is why the clients of the Pržno home welcomed Diaconia's offer to implement its programme, training people with disabilities for the performance of a job. The programme focuses on individual work with each client, based on their specific needs. This often involves repeatedly inquiring about what the clients enjoy doing and what they don't, where they are lacking experience and what they simply don't feel like doing, what they are unable to do because of their disability, what motivates them and what discourages them. All of this is necessary to increase the chances that these people, who often have not worked for several years, will succeed in a new job.

This is just the beginning of the course called "Gardener, Maintenance Man". Irena Šustková, one of the organisers, who has just spent the first working day in the forest clearing with the clients, is happy with her group. Most of the clients have done a great deal of work, which means they will soon be able to continue with the next activity: planting trees.

25 people, of whom 12 should find a permanent job, are to take part in the whole training programme, which consists of several courses. These are the conditions under which the subsidy, thanks to which the programme can actually take place, was granted. So far, nine clients have passed the programme, five of which are currently looking for a job. Two female clients are being trained as cleaning ladies at Diaconia. One of the men who also took the programme is already working as an assistant cook at Pržno home, where he also lives.

Adam Šůra

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The Protestant Theology Faculty of Charles University (PTF) is the successor of the Jan Hus Faculty (1919–1950) and the Comenius Faculty (1950–1990). In the year 1990 it was incorporated into Charles University. The administration of the Faculty is directed by a Dean and a board of Vice-Deans, elected for a four-year term of office. The Faculty offers study programmes at Bachelor's and Master's level in Protestant Theology, Diaconia (Pastoral and Social Work), and Ecumenical Studies, and at doctoral level in various theological fields. The faculty is ecumenically open to all. Pastors of the ECCB receive their theological education here.

„If not you, then who; if not now, then when?“ says wheelchair-bound student from Moldova



Upon meeting Mariana that afternoon, what became immediately apparent was her candid disposition. Indeed, it was not long before we started discussing politics, a topic scarcely discussed even between close acquaintances. Following a delightful exchange of ideas and opinions, she began to tell me her story.

Mariana Moari is a Romanian and Moldavian student of the degree of Social Services, focusing on Diaconia and Christian Social Practice. She is completing her undergraduate joint-degree programme with Charles University's Protestant Theological Faculty, Finland's Diaconia University of Applied Sciences (DIAK), and the Diaconia organization Interdiac. Due to an illness, Mariana is also a wheelchair user and has had to overcome extra challenges since coming to study in the Czech Republic.

Mariana's decision to study in Prague sprung rather from coincidence. In Moldova, she had already been working for several years in the social field with people with both mental and physical disabilities. The organizations she worked for included Keystone, Alliance of Organizations for People with Disabilities, and Motivatie Moldova.

At that time, she was looking for a good-quality study programme in the same field and happened to find an announcement on social media. The programme was in English and was planned to take place in the Czech Republic and Finland. Mariana applied for it in March 2015, and by the summer of the same year she was accepted and was preparing to move to Prague.

This new event signified a lot of challenges for Mariana. In Moldova, she was living with her parents, while in the Czech Republic, she had to become accustomed to living by herself; this included finding a job, as unfortunately her parents were not able to support her financially. She remarked that Prague is not a wheelchair accessible city. In fact, it took her three months to find a suitable place to live.

Mariana was very grateful to learn however, that Charles University would help to support her. In fact, the faculty provided accommodation during her first three days in Prague, orientation, financial support, and general information. The financial help was especially welcome when her money was stolen and she had to find a new part-time job.

When she arrived at the airport in Prague for the first time, she was also very happy to meet a volunteer sent by Charles University. Furthermore, Mariana says she was pleasantly surprised by the care the Protestant Theological Faculty had for their new students. She recalls the particular instance whereby a university member accompanied her and eight other students to take the train destined for their campus in Český Těšín, several hours from Prague.

Mariana explains she experienced many funny situations regarding differences between Moldova and the Czech Republic, particularly in relation to language. Having learned Russian in school, she recalls instances in which similar words in Russian and Czech could have opposite meanings. One time she was cooking Moldavian food, and a resident from the same building entered and exclaimed “to voní!”. In Russian this expression means ‘bad smell’, however given the resident’s positive body language, Mariana deduced that this word must mean ‘good smell’ in Czech, which is indeed true. She says: “It is still hard for me to say to somebody: ‘To dobře voní.’ (‘It smells nicely.’) I feel a disconnection in my brain which is sometimes confused as to which version I use, the Czech or the Russian”.

During winter semester 2017-2018, Mariana embarked on an Erasmus exchange (as part of her study programme) to Helsinki’s DIAK University. While being there, she worked with Romanian and Bulgarian citizens in harsh situations. Mariana’s fluency of Romanian and English gave her the advantage of being able to provide help particularly with situations requiring translation. This experience gave her the opportunity to learn a lot of stories and to become more aware of how difficult it is for undocumented EU migrants in Finland. Indeed, she faced tough situations and had to remind herself that although she might not change the whole world at once, it was important to still help one person at a time. Mariana sums up her exchange experience as “challenging, and interesting at the same time”.

I finally asked Mariana whether she would recommend the exchange, and what message she had for young people, and especially people with disabilities who were also thinking about going on an exchange, but still hesitating to do so. In short, Mariana replied: “Of course, they should go, but it is not for everyone, it’s not easy. You have to be very motivated to do this, but you will learn a lot on the way and you will change your values and understand how important people are”. She also remarked on the importance of learning about a country from the ‘inside’ instead of from the television or the internet. Her advice is that “you should speak to those people, learn languages, see the country”; accordingly, this would help you see that “there is no difference between people”. In fact, she says that the new country you would visit “will become your own country a little bit”.

Mariana believes that “you should take opportunities to travel, study and educate yourself as your money and belongings can be taken away, and education might be the only thing that could help you in the future, to see the world the way it is.” Mariana’s final message, targeted to other students living with a handicap, is that “Going abroad means seeing more. Lots of people are afraid and ashamed to ask for the support; go and ask!” If you ask for help, you can “Make the programme accessible for you”.

Her comment regarding people’s indecision and uncertainty about going on an exchange is “If not you, then who; if not now, then when?”

Jiří Mrázek Reappointed Dean of the Prague Theology Faculty



Associate Professor Jiří Mrázek will continue as Dean of the Protestant Theological Faculty of Charles University (PTF) until 2022. His first four-year term of office came to an end after the academic year 2017-2018, but he was re-elected for a second term by the Academic Senate of PTF (consisting of representatives of the students and teachers) and he was then officially reappointed by the Rector of Charles University.

Jiří Mrázek studied theology at PTF and at Halle an der Saale. After graduating he served for five years as a pastor of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren. In 1990 he successfully defended his doctoral dissertation on „The Transformation of Messianism in Aramaic Texts

from the Qumran“, and in 2005 his habilitation dissertation on „Parables in the Context of Matthew’s Gospel“. He has been teaching at PTF since 1989 and is currently Associate Professor and head of the Department of New Testament Studies. He has in the past served as Vice-Dean for Development and as Vice-Dean for Research and Postgraduate Studies.

Dean Mrázek will be assisted in his task of running the Faculty by the following team: Dr. Ladislav Beneš (Vice-Dean for Study Matters), Dr. Petr Gallus (Vice-Dean for Development), Professor Martin Prudký (Vice-Dean for Research and Postgraduate Studies), Dr. Jan Roskovec (Vice-Dean for International and Ecumenical Relations), Ing. Eva Svobodová (Bursar – administrative and financial matters), and as honorary member of the team the former Dean, Professor Jakub Trojan.

Peter Stephens

Doctoral studies at the Protestant Theological Faculty



For many years, postgraduate doctoral studies at the Protestant Theological Faculty of the Charles University have been possible to do not only in Czech, but also in English or German.

Two study programmes are currently open: Theology and Philosophy. In the Theology programme, students can specialise in one of three fields of study: biblical theology, historical and systemic theology or practical theology; in the Philosophy programme, students focus on the field of philosophy of religion.

More information is provided by the Vice-Dean for postgraduate studies, prof. ThDr. Martin Prudký (prudky@etf.cuni.cz), assistant professor Vladimíra Dubinová (dubinova@etf.cuni.cz), or the

employees of the foreign department (international@etf.cuni.cz).

Studying in a foreign language is subject to a fee of 25,000 CZK (about 1,000 Euros) per academic year. The deadline for submitting applications for the doctoral programme for the academic year 2019/2020 is April 30th 2019, see <https://web.etf.cuni.cz/ETFENG-53.html>.

Ondřej Lukáš