



Gifts that all missionaries need.

ENCOURAGEMENT

When we think about the many ways to support missionaries, we often think about prayers and financial support. Those are absolutely critical, but we sometimes overlook the gift of encouragement, which is also important.

I am so grateful to all of you who send encouraging emails, cards and letters. They mean so much to me! This year has been particularly difficult with the many restrictions imposed by foreign governments to keep residents safe during the pandemic. In the Czech Republic, we were mandated to work from home, with no social visits allowed except for immediate family, for more than 30 percent of the year.

Even though mail was slow, the highlight of my week or month was a letter or card in the mailbox. If you have time and want to encourage missionaries, please write to them. If you want to send a card or letter to me, here is my address:

**Nad Želivkou 475
Praha 6 – Nebužice
Czech Republic 164 00**



To be added to or removed from this mailing list, send an email message to Cynthia.Wrucke@lcms.org with the word ADD or REMOVE in the subject line.

Cynthia.Wrucke@lcms.org

Priceless Christmas Gifts



The nativity set at St. Michael Lutheran Church in Prague reminds us of God's greatest gift.

In early December, a fellow LCMS missionary asked me to be a guest at her online English class and talk about American Christmas traditions, such as giving gifts. The conversation started with a question, “Why do we give gifts at Christmas?” The group of Czech teens was silent.

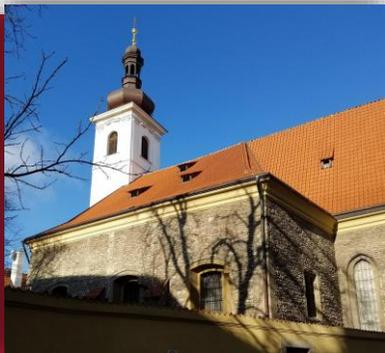
We talked about God’s gift of Jesus as our Savior because He loved us. We often give Christmas gifts to those we love—family, friends, neighbors, even our pets. Czechs love their pets, especially dogs, and I see them in buses, trams, coffee shops and restaurants. Ironically, Czechs don’t give gifts to their pets and the whole concept seemed strange to them.

But the group was more intrigued by the idea of nontraditional gifts, such as making gifts. This tradition started in my family when my children were still quite small. Buying a gift to give someone is difficult for many people, especially children, but making a gift or giving the gift of time can be a true gift of love. I showed some of the handmade gifts from friends that I brought with me to Prague, a special apron, hot pad and handwoven rug. I also talked about some memorable gifts I received from

my children, such as my daughter’s handmade spice rack and the year my son caught walleye and made a special fish fry for me. All the handmade gifts have been creative, thoughtful and, most important, made with love. To me, that reflects the kind of Christmas that I treasure. The baby Jesus didn’t come in a perfectly wrapped box covered in glitzy paper and bows; He lay in a lowly manger for everyone, a gift of pure love.

I started making gifts for some of my Czech friends last year, and they were pleasantly surprised by this foreign concept. This year, when I gave my handmade gift to a friend, she showed me the little knit sock keychain that I made for her last year and told me she thinks of me every time she sees it.

This year, with so many Covid restrictions in place, I treasured the gifts I received through handwritten letters, cards, and precious time to visit with family and friends, all gifts of love. I am reminded of God’s gift of Jesus that came to us because of love, so that Christ would offer the most sacrificial gift of forgiveness for all of us, something so precious that its value is beyond anything we could ever measure—priceless.



PLEASE PRAY FOR:

- All missionaries who are serving abroad.
- America.
- The Czechs who are receiving Bibles from the community library, that God's Word would bring them to faith.

GIVE THANKS FOR:

- Continued health and safety during the ongoing pandemic.
- The gift of time to visit with family and friends during Christmas.
- The prayers, financial support and encouragement from my friends, donors and sponsors.

PRAISE GOD FOR:

- His precious gifts.

Christmas Carp



Carp tank in Prague street market

Quarantine restrictions finally were lifted the first week in December, just in time for stores to open for Christmas shopping and fish tanks to appear in the streets with the traditional Christmas carp. Many people buy the fish whole and take it home to swim in the bathtub until Christmas, which they say makes the fish taste better. For those without an extra tub or who don't want the mess of killing and cleaning the carp at home, the fish vendor will gladly slaughter the fish for you in the open market, so you can take it home ready to cook.

For most Czechs, the traditional Christmas Eve dinner consists of

fried carp, potato salad and "cukrovi," which are delicate Christmas sweets that look like tiny, fancy cookies. For those who bring the live fish home, the traditional meal also includes a carp soup made from the fish head, insides and caviar. I have tasted the soup and it is quite delicious.

Though the Christmas carp dinner is such a strong Czech tradition, I know that I personally don't plan to carry on with it when my service ends. I definitely prefer a delicious perch or walleye fish fry with my potato salad on a Friday night.

This month we are reminded of God's love for us and the gift of our Savior, Jesus Christ:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16 (ESV)

- Cindy Zirbel Wrucke



There are many opportunities to serve as short-term or GEO missionaries. Check out the current list and download an application at lcms.org/service. Click on "Service Opportunities."

To support the LCMS through the work of Cindy Zirbel Wrucke, you may send a tax-deductible gift and make checks payable to:

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
P.O. Box 66861
St. Louis, MO 63166-6861

Mark checks "Wrucke-Czech Republic Support."

Or, you can make checks payable and send to:

Mission Central
40718 Highway E16
Mapleton, IA 51034-7105

Gifts can also be given securely online through my online giving page at lcms.org/wrucke or at <https://missioncentral.us/wrucke/>