



Seaside restaurant in Greece, near the hotel for our Eurasia regional meeting.

PLAKA, GREECE

I traveled to Greece for the first time in August to attend the Eurasia Regional Retreat with my fellow missionaries and their families. While mornings and many evenings were busy with teaching, worship and meals together, we had a few afternoons free to explore the nearby sights.

One afternoon, I went hiking with three other missionaries on Mount Olympus. The trail was ranked as moderate difficulty, with an elevation of 2,000 feet. We hiked up two miles and back down again along a mountain stream, with beautiful waterfalls along the way.

On another afternoon, we walked about 10 minutes to a seaside restaurant for lunch. The beachfront eatery had boats that went out each morning to catch the fresh seafood. I enjoyed delicious grilled shrimp, while my colleagues ate calamari and mussels. We then cooled off with a dip in the Aegean Sea at nearby Lemon beach. The water was crystal clear and salty enough for easy floating and relaxing.



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My Amazing Czech Tutor



My Czech tutor, Barbra Vitarogova, holding one-year-old Lambert, with her mother, Ivana, daughter, Jasmine, and son, Jakob, at Jasmine's kindergarten graduation celebration.

When I first arrived in Prague in 2018, I didn't know even one Czech word. I soon learned while trying to buy groceries, that I needed a tutor to learn the language as quickly as possible. Barbra "Baru" Vitarogova was highly recommended by a former missionary.

Baru taught Czech classes a few blocks from my flat. She was expecting her second child (now age 4) and her mother, who doesn't speak English, substituted during her maternity leave. I am so thankful that they both agreed to help. As Christians, they understand the importance of my mission work and the required Czech language skills.

In addition to twice-weekly lessons, I spent Christmas Eve 2018 with them. Baru's husband, who is a Prague bus driver, drove me by car to their home in a nearby village, Buštěhrad. They joyfully shared many of their traditional Czech customs and cuisine with me. When I broke my arm in 2020, Baru continued lessons at my flat, and her family brought groceries and gifts. She

has taken me to the airport at 3:45am for an early morning flight, included me with Czech Christmas caroling, and took me to pick fruit at a Czech farm. She arranged a substitute tutor when her third child was born last summer; again, the substitute did not speak English.

Baru recently included me in Jasmine's kindergarten graduation as part of their family. I learned that students start preschool at age 3 and have the same set of teachers the first three years of school. They then go to the elementary school from ages 6 to approximately 15.

After the graduation ceremony, Baru asked me to help her teach a beginning Czech class to Ukrainian women, who are refugees here with their children. About 70% of Ukrainians are Christian, so the women were surprised at the number of Czech atheists. I was honored to help these newcomers learn more about the Czech language and culture with an amazing teacher who loves her students. I praise God for Baru and all of her help.



Eurasia Regional Missionary Retreat

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

- An easy visa renewal process to allow me to continue my missionary service.
- Mission-minded applicants for three open GEO missionary positions in Prague (lcms.org/servenow).
- Our Czech pastors who need missionaries to support their work.

GIVE THANKS FOR:

- My Czech tutor, Barbora Vitarogova.
- My fellow Eurasia missionaries and our alliance missionary pastors for their service in the region.
- Opportunities to share the Good News with many who do not yet know Jesus as their Savior.

PRAISE GOD FOR:

- His presence and provisions in our daily lives.



Rev. Dr. Arthur Just, professor at the Fort Wayne seminary, provided instruction at our regional meeting on church planting.

For the first time in three years, Eurasia missionaries and their families gathered in Greece for our Eurasia Regional Missionary Retreat. We were unable to get together the past two years because of Covid travel restrictions. For more than half of the missionaries, the regional meeting was the first one they were able to attend. This was my third regional meeting, with the first one in Vilnius, Lithuania (2018) and the last one in Odesa, Ukraine (2019).

Several of our alliance missionary pastors, who work closely with LCMS in the region, also joined us. We were blessed to have Rev. Dr. Arthur Just join us from Fort Wayne, with his inspirational and sound theological instruction on church planting. More than 60 people attended the regional meeting from throughout Europe and the United States.

As I reflect on the week together, I remember with joy the daily worship services and closing Divine Service in English. I also enjoyed the beautiful location for daily fellowship and meals with my colleagues and their families.

This month we remember the critical need for more missionaries willing to serve:

He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

Luke 10:2 (NIV)

- 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.”

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