

From Chelsea Irwin, LCMS
Missionary
Serving the Lord in the
Czech Republic and
Central Europe



SERVING AS A FAMILY

One of the highlights of my summer was getting to serve at an English Bible Camp with my dad. It was his 14th English Camp and my 13th, but our passion for serving God through English Bible camps is still strong. It was so special to finally serve with my dad in the country where I serve full-time. One of my favorite things about Short-Term service is the relationships built with the locals and the American team. In this particular case, my dad and I were one team. Each evening, we shared our highs and lows from the day not only as a team, but as family. The bond between a child and parent who serve abroad together is extremely special, and I thank God every day for these experiences.



A FIRST TIME FOR EVERYTHING



“Volunteers Arrive!”

This is what was written on my calendar for July 5th, 2022. All the months of preparation, paperwork, zoom meetings, and configuring details were finally coming to life.

This summer was full of firsts! The first time having volunteers on the field after the pandemic, the first time we have ever had LCMS volunteers in the Czech Republic to serve at English Bible Camps, and the first time for me to host volunteers as the official coordinator.

As the volunteers gathered at the Orientation site, excitement was in the air. Following an opening devotion and the first dinner together, we gathered for fellowship in the common room. From the roaring laughter and joyous conversation, it felt like the group had all known each other for years. It was evident that God had selected each volunteer for this specific service long before they arrived.

The rest of the orientation before camp consisted of seminars learning the best tips for teaching English, working with an interpreter, and learning about Czech culture and the local Lutheran church body. On Saturday morning, each Czech host came to pick up their team and drive them to their site of service. Handshakes and hugs went around as the volunteers dispersed. The relationships built at the orientation set the tone for the camaraderie and collaboration within each team as they engaged in Gospel sharing throughout the week.

(Story continued on p. 3)



Left: In 2021, our church partner (EC MISE) brought on Renata to the team. Renata was tasked with being the local Czech coordinator for the English Bible Camps in the Czech Republic. Before camp, she made phone calls, and reservations, and held meetings to help the Czech churches prepare to receive volunteers. During the orientation and debrief, Renata cooked all of the meals for the volunteers. After camp, we debriefed and discussed what positive changes could be made for next year. Praise God for her efforts to spread the Gospel through English Bible Camps. (From left to right: Renata, missionary Hayden Rensner, and me)

Right: Matt Pleshek, who served in the town of Komorní Lhotka, teaches vocabulary for the I AM statement “I am the Good Shepherd”.



Below: Each morning, the volunteers were encouraged to reveal the day’s theme by hiding an object in a box, in which students pull the item out and guess what the theme could be. Here, volunteer Lynae Reith holds up her team’s box which reads the overarching camp theme “Jesus Who Are You?”



Above: During the orientation, volunteers got a taste of the Silesian culture. A friend helped to arrange a traditional ensemble and even taught us a few traditional dances from the region. Here they play and sing folk music from the Beskydy mountain region.

YOU CAN SERVE WITH THE LCMS TOO!

There are many opportunities to serve as a short-term or GEO missionary. Check out the current list and download an application at [lcms.org/service](https://www.lcms.org/service). Click on “Service Opportunities.”

PRAY

- The war situation in Ukraine
- The upcoming volunteer opportunities for 2023
- That God would provide an opportunity for me to teach this Spring

GIVE THANKS

- For you, my prayer warriors and encouragers.
- All the volunteers who participated in the English Bible Camps in the Czech Republic
- The opportunity to serve with my Dad at an English Bible Camp

SEE YOU NEXT YEAR!



When the week of English Bible Camps was finished, we came back together for a time of fellowship and debriefing. The room echoed again with laughter and joy as volunteers shared their most memorable moments from camp. We also shared challenges and the many ways in which we saw God working during the week. I couldn't help but get a little teary-eyed as I listened to stories of friendships built and the Gospel conversations that were held at each camp with kids and camp staff. English Bible Camps always has a special place in my heart. I am thankful to God for this first group of volunteers I worked with in my new role as Volunteer Coordinator. The joys, challenges, relationships, and memories will definitely be remembered. I can't wait for 2023!

God continues to bless this ministry through your prayers and financial support. Prayerfully consider partnering in God's mission to the Czech Republic and Eurasia through a financial gift.

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