

**"Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves.
A cord of three strands is not quickly broken." – Ecclesiastes 4:12**

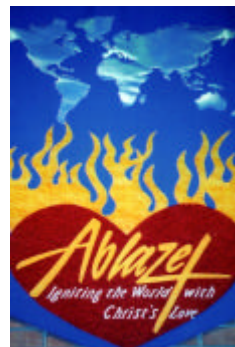


LCMS WORLD MISSION

Jon & Jordan Benning * Cieszyn, Poland

November / December 2005

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Dear Friends in Christ,

Happy Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas, and Happy New Year! We hope this newsletter finds you happy and well (though a little belatedly).

Missionary Retreat in Slovakia

In early November, we had the opportunity to meet up with our cohorts who are serving in Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia. Though we had kept in touch through email, it was nice to see everyone again in person. We also had some special guests in attendance. Debbie Feenstra, the Missionary Support Administrator for World Mission, came from St. Louis to join us and to participate in some short-term mission projects in the area. We were also able to meet a couple of directors of schools in Hungary as well as David and Slavka Daniel, missionaries who have been working in Bratislava for many years.

Our time in Stry Smokovec – an ideal place to rejuvenate – was very special as we shared how we were adjusting to our respective sites, worshiped together in English, and spent some time recharging after an action-packed couple of months in our new cultures. We felt it was an extremely valuable use of time and resources. We're grateful to you – our supporters – for making it possible and to World Mission for making this time and space a priority for volunteers.

Wintry Weather

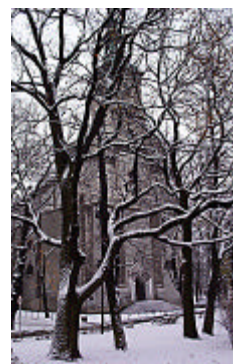
What a difference a month can make! The weather was fairly mild up until mid-November. Then one day it just started snowing and seemed like it would never stop - the earth here has been white ever since! Rather than being dreary, distressing and depressing as we (mostly Jordan) feared, the snow is beautiful and we are kept plenty warm with our winter coats and cozy apartment. Though I'm sure we'll be relieved to see spring arrive, for now we are enjoying a beautiful Polish winter.

New Opportunities

In our previous newsletter, we made a couple of requests of you. What a response! One request was for new or gently used children's books in English. Our little library is growing thanks to those of you who have already sent books or who are working to organize a shipment. Please continue these efforts - they will be really valuable in our work with the elementary students.

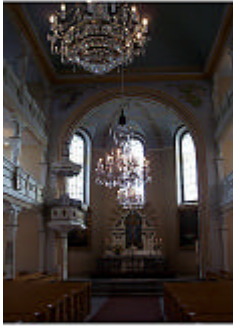
Another request that we made was for you to pray for new outreach efforts to be opened up for us. You must have really taken the request to heart and to the Lord, because that prayer has been answered. It's amazing how many new things have been set in motion in the past few weeks.

Through the Ablaze! initiative, LCMS seeks to share the Good News of Jesus with 100 million unreached or uncommitted people by 2017, the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. No matter where we are, each of us has opportunities to share God's love with those around us. What opportunities do you see in your church, workplace, or neighborhood? LCMS also lists opportunities at www.lcmsworldmission.org. Check it out!





In addition to the adult classes we teach at LOTE on Tuesdays, we have added a Friday class for the members of the Goleyszow youth group. There are many young people in the church, but few participate in youth group meetings. The hope is that they will be able to draw more members by offering free English lessons from native speakers. The group has been very nice to us and even included us in their Christmas celebration. Jon shared a brief Christmas message, and we sang lots of songs (some in English). We also participated in a Polish Christmas tradition. Each person takes a sheet of oplatki (like communion wafers). Then you greet another person, exchange pieces of the oplatki, and share blessings and good wishes for the New Year. Families traditionally do this on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, and some people we spoke with remembered it as one of the best parts of their Christmas celebrations.



Besides teaching and celebrating together, there have also been opportunities for more worship and study of God's Word in English. One of our friends – a fellow teacher – has begun hosting an English Bible study in her home. We're looking forward to getting to know the members of the Bible study and to growing in understanding along with them. We're also attempting to involve students in a Wednesday morning devotional time. This was one of Heather's ideas, and we were eager to help it come to fruition. This is one area that needs your prayers. We have established a time and place, put up signs, and made announcements, but our attendance is still extremely small (just us). We are considering several alternatives and really want to have this time for and with students to devote to God. Please pray that we would know how to proceed – if we should try something new or be patient with the current plan.



Gobble Gobble²

There were certainly some fears about being away from home on one of our favorite holidays. Though it was sad to be away from our family during this time, we were fortunate enough to take part in two fabulous Thanksgiving celebrations. On Thanksgiving Day, we were invited to the home of Tim and Renata Hinrich – a missionary couple serving in a nearby town. Tim is American, and Renata is Polish, and they have a young son, Peter. He's hilarious and very likable, though it's humbling to be around a 7 year-old who can switch so easily between English and Polish! We were joined by Heather and another American-Polish missionary couple. Tim had been home on furlough over the summer so he was able to bring back canned sweet potatoes, pumpkin, and cranberry sauce – items not found so easily here in Poland. We loved the food and the friends with whom to share it.



The following weekend, we met up with our Eurasian volunteers in Bratislava, Slovakia. We joined a large number of ELCA volunteers and the Slovak bishop for a HUGE feast at the seminary there. It was a little overwhelming to be around so many Americans at once, but it was also nice to meet some new people. In addition to the food, fellowship and the ability to worship our Lord in English, we were also able to check out the Christmas market in the old town. What a great experience! The lights, the crafts, the people, and the smells of spiced wines and smoked meats were . . . difficult to describe. Trust me though, it was great fun.



Christmas Party

We brought some of the Christmas cheer back with us to Poland, and we recently hosted a Christmas party. We were very happy that so many of our new friends could attend. In fact, so many came that we were cutting it close as far as the number of available plates and chairs were concerned. No one seemed to mind the slight crowding though, and we had a great time. Even more amazing than the fact that so many people came was that we had so many new friends to invite! We have just been here a few months, but already we have found people who have been very kind to us and who have really made us feel at home here.

Babies Abound

The past couple of months have brought lots of baby news. (Don't worry, folks – no news from our little family.) David and Radka Fiala welcomed their son, Vaclav Cernak Fiala, into the world on November 2nd. Also, Josh and Angie Douglas (who served in Tisovec, Slovakia, with David and Radka) announced that they are expecting their first little one. In order to prepare for Baby Douglas' arrival, they had to return to the States earlier than they had hoped, but they continue to work as ambassadors for their school in Tisovec. While we were sad to see them go, we are excited for their growing family and wish them all the best as Josh searches for a teaching job and they both prepare for their new lives as parents. As a side note, Josh is a certified secondary history teacher and a graduate of Concordia-Seward – any leads about jobs would be appreciated.

As you may have read on our website or blog, another very special baby was born recently. Caroline Elise was born on November 25th to Paul and Jessica Benning, Jon's brother and sister-in-law. She's a beautiful baby, and the family is completely smitten with her. She was baptized this Sunday along with her foster brother, Bralynn. We're so proud of the work that Paul and Jess have done as foster parents, and their foster son's choice speaks volumes about the witness they have been in his life.

Prayers and Praises

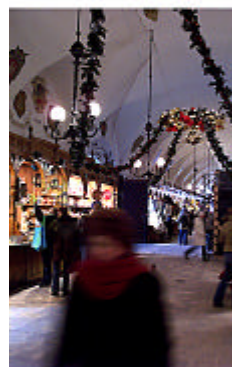
- * For the newest Benning and for the baptisms of Caroline and Bralynn
- * That God has provided so many new friends and opportunities for us during our time here in Poland
- * For our friend and fellow missionary, Harriet, that she would heal quickly and fully from foot/back problems
- * For the beautiful snowy weather
- * For the healthy birth of Vaclav Fiala, son of Radka and David Fiala who are serving in Tisovec, Slovakia
- * For Rex and Linda Rinne, as they travel home and back to Slovakia and mourn the loss of Rex's mother
- * For Josh and Angie Douglas as they prepare for their baby and readjust to life in the States
- * That we are attentive to God's will as we search for ways to spiritually engage students at our schools

We are deeply thankful for your continued concerns, prayers, and good wishes. Thank you for being on this mission field with us. Our small gift to you is the do-it-yourself (such an American thing!) Polish Christmas ornament. If you find a few minutes between family, friends, church, and food for a little arts and crafts time, please get your scissors out and enjoy.

We pray God's blessings upon you and your family now and throughout the New Year. We hope everyone is able to spend joy-filled moments with those they love most. And, as we all rejoice in the birth of our Lord and Savior, may we have the peace of Christ that comes with the knowledge of His death and resurrection. He has risen indeed. Merry Christmas.

Jonathan and Jordan Benning

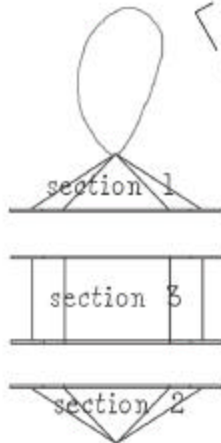
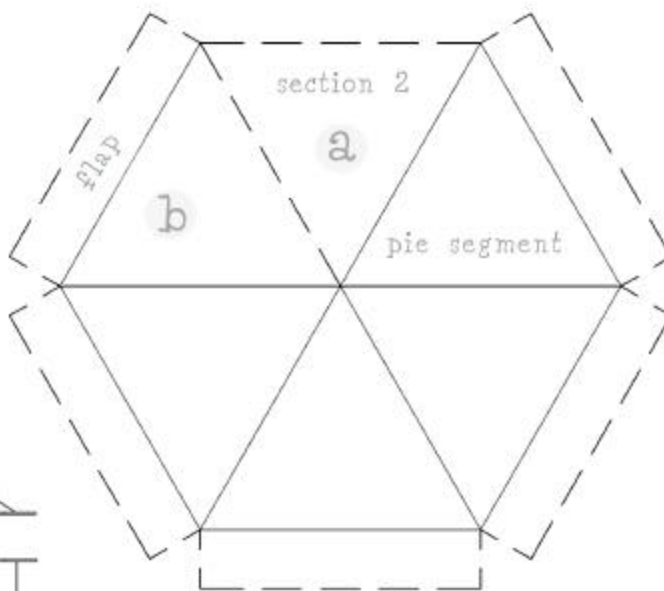
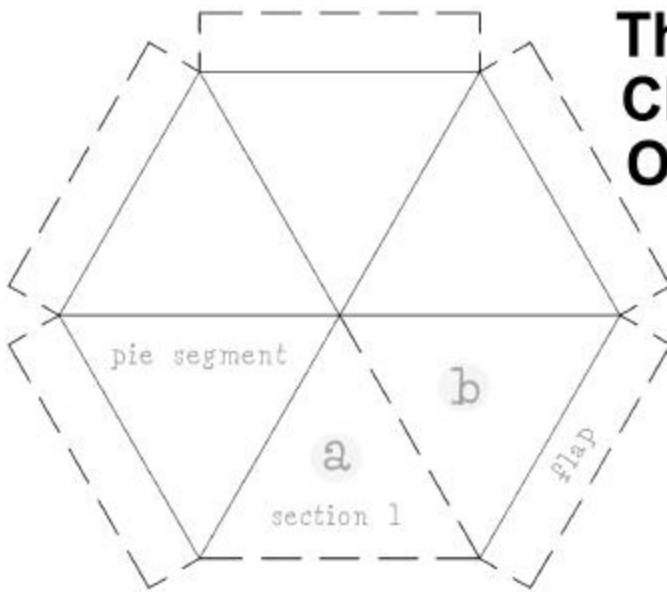
Photos: (page 1) Jesus Church across the street, outside our door, Jesus Church (page 2) European volunteers at retreat in Stary Smokovec, Goleszow church, cemetery in Dzegelow, Cieszyn main square, grand hotel in Stary Smokovec (page 3) Polish souvenirs, amber (a Polish specialty), the market hall in Krakow, wooden carvings, wooden plates



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Wesołych Świąt! * Merry Christmas! * Wesołych Świąt!

The Polish Christmas Ornament

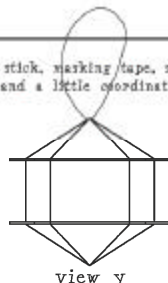
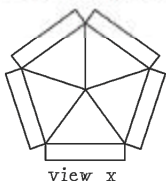


general folding concepts:

valley fold  (side view)

mountain fold  (side view)

materials: scissors, glue stick, masking tape, string or ribbon, pin, patience, and a little coordination



1. cut along dotted lines
2. fold along solid lines
3. mountain fold all flaps
4. valley fold all pie & box segments
5. fold a under b & paste w/ glue stick (do this w/ all 3 sections)
6. use pin to make a small hole in the center of section 1, fold string/ribbon in half, and put ends thru hole & tape to underside of section 1
7. paste section 1 flaps to section 3 flaps & then paste section 3 flaps to section 2 flaps



a

section 3