

### **...BRIDGES... Number 4, 2007: Easter Transformations**

on behalf of the ECCB's American Working Group and PC(USA)'s Czech Mission Network by Joyce Michael

As I write this up-date on Easter Sunday afternoon, a glance at the clock tells me that in a little while, churches in the United States will be resounding with joyful cadences of "Christ the Lord is Risen Today." Here, in Prague, we have already sung our "alleluias" to traditional Czech tunes and have already pondered the affirmation of God's power that is extended by the mystery of the resurrection. Moreover, the contrast between the reflective re-enactment of the Last Supper that took place on Good Friday evening and the Eucharist that we celebrated today was demonstrated in a striking way by a young woman with Down's Syndrome who is part of the congregation that we attend.

As she stood in the circle of communicants, that special person opened her little yellow songbook so that she could participate in singing the communion hymn. Then, she received the elements seriously and devoutly, as she always does. However, after the words of dismissal, a smile crossed her face, and she walked toward the pastors, rather than heading back to her seat with her co-worshippers. As she shook Pastor Abigail's hand and greeted Pastor Petr, both of those devoted folks responded with gentle smiles. Then, the young woman bent down to take a close look at the pastry Easter lamb that had been placed on the worship table. She lingered for only a few seconds before shaking Pastor Petr's hand again and moving on. Yet, a joyful wonder shone from her face, and a certain ease of movement graced her step. Thus, it was clear to me that she had experienced and enacted an Easter encounter for all of us. In his Easter sermon, Pastor Petr had stressed that the resurrection invites – and calls – us to step beyond the sense of resignation that sometimes holds us fast, and our young friend had shown us what it means to embrace a buoyant hope that is already "eternal" in its grace.

Reflecting on this Easter encounter, I looked at the Easter lamb again. This twelve-inch long and six-inch high pastry is a charming tradition here, although this year, I have also seen pastry roosters and other spring-time critters for sale. Many of the Easter lambs are pre-packaged, commercial products, but others – like the one on the communion table – are carefully made at home. I had noticed that the Easter lamb was in its usual place when I entered the worship area, but I had not focused on it until our young friend stopped before it. The purple ribbon around its neck called to mind Jesus' passion and death, but my eyes were quickly drawn to the lamb's face, which seemed to reflect a winsome blend of wisdom and mercy. "It is just a pastry lamb," I objected, but no – it was a lively symbol of the Easter assurance – that once the season of suffering and betrayal has run its course, the wonder of God's love and Christ's presence will prevail. Our young friend had seen that, and thanks to her vision, I was also able to perceive that the joy and hope of "eternal" life are actually present here and now. Pavel Smetana's second poem from Easter 2004 teased at my mind, and I was convinced that...

#### **A Miracle has happened**

On a quiet cottage pathway  
in the rays of spring sunshine  
a miracle has happened.  
The armour of ice has cracked and has  
flowed into streams  
whose thirst is assuaged.  
There, where winter had looked down  
on morning in a mirror of ice, a tiny daisy  
has now cautiously raised its head.

And in my heart, I have heard these words:  
"Spring has now arrived  
and has taken command."  
In the struggle  
of winter with spring,  
of death with resurrection, and  
of the cross with the empty tomb,  
life has been victorious!

**SO IT HAS!**