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na Slovensko

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A Challenging Year Ahead

I hope this letter finds you well even in the midst of our world's economic crisis. If there is a good side to a crisis like this then it is that we remember just how fragile we are and how the equilibrium of our whole world rests on God's sustaining will.

It's not a bad thing to remember at least every once in a while that God's creation continues to exist and thrive—the rain continues to fall, the sun continues to shine, and governments continue to

bring at least a semblance of order to our world—only because each and every moment God, in his mercy and according to his salvific oversight, continues to will it to be so.

And so as we look forward to the year ahead we realize we have some challenges to face and we



look to God's faithful sustenance.

Todd & Jana, Elisabeth and Max

Clear Pass on Comprehensive Exams Day 1



This semester I'm looking forward to reaching two more milestones in the PhD program: comprehensive exams and the dissertation proposal.

I received word from the Academic Doctoral Office earlier this week that I received a [clear pass](#) on the first day of comprehensive exams.

That's great news and a bit of a confidence builder. But... Still... there are three days left and they are by far more difficult.

I will be taking those exams the week of March 23rd. That will leave about a month and a half before the end of the semester to defend my

dissertation proposal before my committee.

For now, the big milestone is comprehensive exams.



Upcoming Challenges:

- Jana's Music Together training, looking forward to eventual certification as an official Music Together teacher
- February 9: Classes start in Slovakia
- March 23-27: Comps days 2-4
- Visit to Slovakia in summer of 2009?
- Finances

Jana and Music Together

You may remember that Jana attended a week of Music Together training last summer. Music Together is an early childhood music training program (click on the graphic to learn more).

We see potential for ministry in Slovakia because parents attend classes with their children. It could be a good way to create a bridge between the church and people in the community. The key to evangelism is creating contexts where we can get to know people, form strong relationships, and share the gospel based on that foundation.

We saw a lot of potential for this kind of ministry when Jana was involved in the

Mother's Club in Nitra and so we think it's worth the investment now.

So here's the update. Jana is currently a teacher trainee in a local Music Together program. After three semesters she will obtain official certification. That allows her to open up her

own Music Together program anywhere in the world.

It was a bit of a struggle getting her foot in the door on this one so we consider this an answer to your prayers. Thank you!



cont. from atricle

When you send your breath (or Spirit), they are created, and you renew the face of the earth.

May the glory of YHWH endure forever; may YHWH rejoice in his works—

He who looks at the earth, and it trembles, who touches the mountains, and they smoke.

Psalm 104:30-32

God's involvement in creation reminds us of his faithfulness in bringing to fruition his plan of salvation to the ends of the earth.

Financial Status Report

We have a lot to be thankful for in the area of finances.

We count it a miracle that we can be here at Trinity working on this PhD for an extended period of time. There's no doubt in our mind that it will be (and is) well worth the investment as we will return to Slovakia equipped to train pastors, missionaries and church leaders from Slovakia, Czech, Slovenia and Romania. Spending four years on a PhD is not something that every missionary gets to do and it's not something that every supporter gets behind. That's why we're thankful for your faithful prayers and financial support.

We finished 2008 in

great shape. Expenses exceeded giving by just \$100 as a result of some really generous gifts at the end of the year. Thank you!

2009 looks to be more challenging. Six supporters have recently let us know that due to changing financial circumstances they are going to have to discontinue or lower their support. All told it amounts to a decrease of \$420 per month.

I guess that means we're joining the ranks of the other 303 million people in the US and 6.8 billion worldwide affected by the economic downturn—some less, some much, much more.

So put into perspective I feel pretty good about

2009—especially considering God's faithfulness in the past.

Here's a great Psalm you might want to look at. It talks about God's role in sustaining creation (a reminder of where our next meal is really coming from).

These (creatures) all look to you to give them their food at the proper time.

When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things.

When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust.

Psalm 104:27-29