



# The Prague Christian Fellowship POST

Monthly Newsletter of the Sbor Křesťanské společnosti PCF

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## Are Congregations Really Obsolete?

I have noticed a discussion about how we should do church in the last few weeks. If I understand the recent trends, some people are very keen on an idea of a “house church,” i.e. Christians meeting informally in small groups in flats or houses. Recently this approach got a boost by several articles circulating on the internet.

Being a “veteran” Christian in the Czech Republic, I decided to offer some ideas. Of course, the whole concept of a church as little organized as possible and as informal as possible is nothing new. There were always situations in history of the church when nothing else was possible. Just two decades ago a vast majority of Christians in former Soviet Union and several other Communist countries (e.g. Bulgaria) did not know anything else. And, of course, nothing else is possible in several Muslim countries and to a large extent in China.

There is enough evidence that church can thrive in these conditions. I have heard of a congregation in Ethiopia, which had membership of about 500 people before the Communist takeover in 1974. After this takeover the meetings of this congregation were banned and Christians could gather only in groups up to 8 people. When Communist rule ended in 1991 and the congregation reconvened, it had 50 000

members (I hope I did not fall victim to charismatic exaggeration; I know this from hearsay. I never was in Ethiopia).

**...this move away from congregations to home churches has a lot to do with Western individualism, and a loss of understanding what authority is about...**

I state this only to make a point that I have no doubt that church can exist as a house church. Nevertheless, I see the recent movement away from “organized” congregations to mere informal meetings of several Christians as highly problematic. And I will try to explain why.

What is so captivating about small Christian meetings? Well, I think that these meetings offer us something extremely important, namely fellowship. That is something we value and cherish very much – and rightly so. Real Christian fellowship is a precious gift of God. We can say that it is one of the most valuable and most important gifts.

Our world becomes more and more complex and we understand less and less how it actually “works.” More people

than ever have a job in which they seldom encounter other people. Many people spend days sitting at home at their computer. Small fellowship of likeminded brothers and sisters can be very, very refreshing after such a day.

I do not want to say a single word against that. And I would miss something substantial if I would have to attend some American “megachurch” with no home groups (In fact, I would not like to attend such a church at all).

This being said, I feel a definite unease about recent developments.

Fellowship is a very precious gift, but church has a much broader mandate than to provide fellowship. Maybe this can be lost on a North American Christian who understands very well that denominations and movements are here to stay even if he and all his friends decide to attend just informal home meetings. Well, I belong to a smaller nation. Evangelical Christians form less than one per cent of the population. I became

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## What's Inside?

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- ◆ PCF Birthdays & Prayer Info
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# Family Profile

## Michael & Kelli Bodé

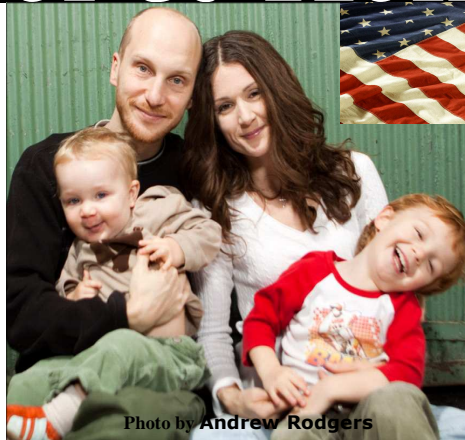
**Kelli** - Philippians 4:4-8

I grew up in a small town in Alabama called Huntsville. I was surrounded by family that loved me and along with my twin sister was really raised by grandmother and grandfather because my mom had to go back to work after maternity leave. We basically lived with MawMaw and PawPaw until we started school at the age of 5 and then they would pick us up after school when the day was over. We'd also spend all summer with my grandparents and on the weekends because we'd beg our mom to let us stay.

I say all this because my grandparents had a strong faith in Jesus and this is what I remembered first when God got a hold of my heart.

When we (my twin sister and I) turned 15 we moved away to Huntsville due to my dad's job changing. It was only one hour north but I remember my sister and I deciding to be different people. I didn't go to church any more and I even left home at the age of 19 to live with a guy, his mother, and a brother. That was the beginning of a 12 year life totally turned away from God and yearning and looking for Him at the same time.

I got into drugs, alcohol, and worked in bars for a living. I was looking for something but didn't really know what. I searched in many different places: religions, philosophies, cults, knowledge, new age, people, books, substances, dream escape, places, music, technology, anything and everything. My sins were so great that I would drink to pass out and forget the pain but that only added to them. I was so depressed I remember I didn't want to do anything. I didn't even want to just



walk anywhere because I'd only have to walk back again. I thought, "what was the point?"

Finally, someone saw my pain from the alcohol and told me to go to a rehab to help myself. She knew Jesus too but I guess she saw I wasn't ready to hear. Some immediate "practical" help was necessary. So I gave up trying to "do it all" and "fix myself" and "find the answers." I couldn't do it. I got clean from alcohol and drugs and the rehab introduced God back into my life but I did not yet connect to Jesus.

I moved back in with my parents and got a job as a veterinarian and continued back in college. In college a new friend saw my searching so she took me to her pastor. In the Pastor's office on May 28, 2002 I let Jesus capture my heart and He still has it.

I moved in with a family and lived there with them for 3 years until I married Michael who I met at a college group. He was from another church and their college group and ours would get together. God called me to the intercessory prayer. I graduated from college studying graphic design and portraits in pastels. We had Luke 13 months later after we were married. We bought a home in Alabama and then also transferred to Emeryville, California for a year and a half to do

God's work there. Afterwards we moved back to Huntsville, Alabama for a few months and then God moved us to Prague.

In all this God has shown me what it means to love and He's shown me His grace and mercy when I fall. God has done a work in me and continues to refine me. He shows me how to get my mind off myself (while He does the work in those area) and I focus outward on His Kingdom and helping others.

### Michael

As for my side of the story (Michael), it was much the same. I had a loving family that prayed for me but over the years I strayed and ended up in the same pit of addictions. It was in that darkest time that I turned back to God and found forgiveness in Jesus. Almost immediately my life changed and I found myself sent out into new lands with new responsibilities. But I also found I had a new strength and peace in me that was never there before. Christ guided me to my loving wife, to new adventures, and most recently to here. We are so excited to be part of what God is doing. There isn't anything more exciting, challenging, and rewarding than what the Lord plans.

### PCF Finances

March 2010

eBanka Account No. 181730394/5500

98,623	<b>Total Income</b>
4,351	Internet & Comm.
11,813	Office Rent & Electricity
8,500	Church Rent
4,485	Supplies & Equipment
0	Copying & Publishing
40,200	Salaries/Employ Taxes
3,275	Evangelism & Teaching
9,000	Church Giving
1,486	Fees & Advertising
0	Miscellaneous
83,111	<b>Total Expenses</b>
15,512	<b>Net Income</b>

All amounts shown are in Czech Crowns.

(Continued from page 1 “....Obsolete?”)

a pastor of the smallest congregation in Prague (the capital city) back in 1977 (i.e. still under Communist rule). There were things which we could not even dream about – not only because of the Communist interference, but also because of the lack of resources (finances, manpower, etc.). For example, we felt a need to provide a new translation of the Bible into Czech language. We have it now, but it was a real challenge (published almost 20 years after the idea). I cannot imagine how we could do that if we would stress only informal meetings in houses. Soon after the end of Communist rule we sent out our first missionary couple. They were not financed by one wealthy Christian – this couple and all the subsequent missionaries could only be sent out thanks to the fact that our congregation grew substantially subsequently, and was connected with other congregations specifically to be able to start such ventures.

Our congregation grew (an interesting fact is that the growth rate under Communism was incomparably higher than after its demise) and from time to time some Christians appeared, and “explained to us” that being a big church is not good and meeting in homes and in small numbers is the only thing which counts. Well, many years elapsed since then and I must say their present day absence makes me wonder if they changed their mind after several years or if they got raptured! Unfortunately, most likely they fell away. I do not think that this form of church can survive – unless the church finds

itself in the condition of real persecution.

It seems to me that this move away from congregations to home churches has a lot to do with Western individualism, and a loss of understanding what authority is about. I do not think that Western individualism is a child of mature Christianity. It is more of a disease than achievement. It is very much connected with how *I feel*, what *I desire* or *need* than with real Christian freedom. In addition to that, it seems to me that the Western culture does not recognize *any* authority. Yes, authority can be misused and authoritarian pastors and/or elders are a real danger. But it seems to me that in Western culture *all* authority is somehow suspicious. In this, Christians are being conformed to this world, not vice versa. I am sorry, but this is not the attitude towards authority which I find in the New Testament.

As you can see, it very much depends on our *motives* for welcoming the movement from a congregation to a house church.

Yes, it definitely is easier to meet just as small groups in flats and houses. You hardly need any organization. But I do not see this alone is sufficient if we are to fulfill all the mandates of the church. And if this approach to Christianity is hailed as something much better and above “traditional” and “organized” Christian meetings, I see the red warning light shining brightly.

Dan Drápal



## PRAYER REQUESTS

- 1) **Church Finances** – please pray for faithfulness of the community to tithe joyfully and wisdom in PCF spending and giving.
- 2) **Current & Former PCF members involved with full-time ministry** such as John & Kelsie Mullen, Doris Rabus, Rosane da Silva, David Snell, Kelly Kuest, Sam Ewell, Michael Stadler, Will Porter, Andy Faust, Nathan Parry, Arnout Francke, and Roger & Robin Harsh for God’s total provision and protection in their lives. **“Always keep on praying for all the saints.” (Eph. 16:18)**
- 3) **Servants** – Please pray that God would call some worship leaders to come help with PCF, CISP and IHOPP, and pray for a pastoral couple so John and Kelsie can hand off and take a furlough in 2011.
- 4) **Outreaches**– please pray for God’s leading and for our outreaches and mission trips.
- 5) **Worship**— please pray for the PCF worship schedule this spring and summer.



## Upcoming Birthdays

The following PCF members past and present will be having birthdays this month.

Maryna Khimishinets	May 5
Maggie Kelley	May 5
Markéta Lišková	May 7
Ana Overwater	May 9
Carolyn Wright	May 11
Karel Sedláček	May 11
Victoria Kutkina	May 11
Lukaš Sedláček	May 14
Jana Milfiatová	May 15
Mugero Nicholas	May 16
Allen Nishie	May 16
John Duryea	May 17
Johan Bruce	May 18
Emiliya Guliyeva	May 18
Hope Edgar Mares	May 19
Joseph Boakye	May 19
Martins Onemegie	May 24
Doris Rabus	May 24
Kelli Bodé	May 24
John Mullen	May 25
Tim Old	May 26
Samantha Trad Pštröss	May 26
Marcus Frakes	May 27
Victoria Frye	May 30
Tene Sánchez Falcón	May 30



In April PCF started a Bible study by Jim Cymbala, bestselling author of *Fresh Wind*, *Fresh Fire*. It is a powerful new small group study that helps communities tap into the transforming power of prayer.

“Prayer can change lives and circumstances like nothing else can. What are the keys that unlock its power, that turn prayer from a mere activity into a vital link with God and all his resources? In this DVD, Jim Cymbala, pastor of Brooklyn Tabernacle, shows you and your small group truths about prayer that God has used to turn his own church from a tiny, struggling inner-city congregation into a vital, thriving community of believers who pray with passion, focus, and faith.”

The DVD series features teachings by Jim Cymbala and video interviews of ordinary people who have received extraordinary answers to their prayers. The following six sessions inspire prayer and intercession: 1) God's Heart for Us; 2) The Amazing Power of Prayer; 3) Obedience in Prayer; 4) The Word of God and Prayer; 5) Why Prayer Matters; 6) Creating a Prayer Ministry in Your Church.

**“Discover the power of God to restore hope, ignite faith, work miracles, and change lives—through prayer”**

The response by our community has been great. We are offering the course on Sunday afternoons (12 pm), Tuesday evenings (7 pm), Wednesday mornings (9:30 am), Thursday afternoons (1:30 pm), and Saturday afternoons (4:00 pm). Materials are available from Kelsie Mullen.

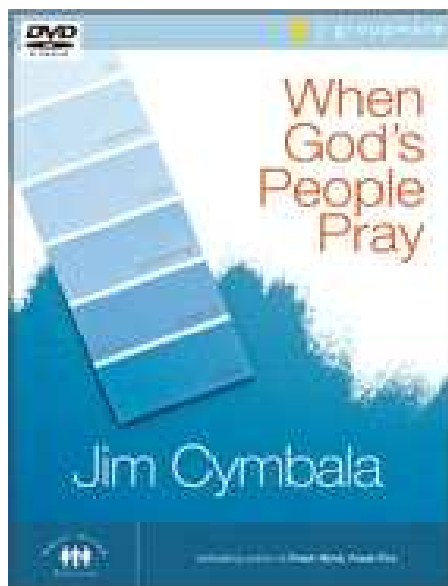
We specifically targeted this season between Passover and

Pentecost to be a time of prayer and fasting. In our community there are some who are sick and need healing, people who are struggling with depression and need a miracle, others fighting addictions who need deliverance, unemployed who need favor / provision, and lost friends who need to find the Savior. It's time to pray!

If you missed the first week of the study, it is not too late to join a group. The material is mostly home study and can be picked up at any time.

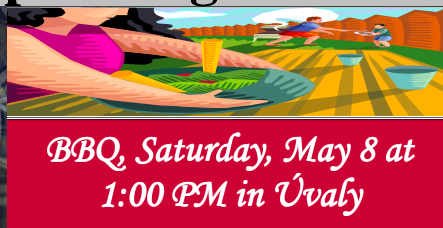
Also, this season is more than just a Bible study, it is a community focus on prayer. We have available a prayer booklet by Mike Bickle and prayer materials on the PCF web page (under publications). We hope that as we make a personal commitment to individual prayer, it will in turn change our corporate gatherings. We hope to experience a greater sense of God's manifest presence as we gather together.

We know Christ is not some distant elusive God—hiding from his creation, but we also know this world has a way of helping us to drift off to sleep. It is time to wake up!



## Upcoming PCF Events

**Outreach**  
**May 15**  
**5:00 pm**



**BBQ, Saturday, May 8 at**  
**1:00 PM in Úvaly**

**SUMMER FUN**  
**Missions Trip – July 22-26**  
**10th Annual Úvaly**  
**English Day Camp - August 2-6**

*Should you have a testimony to share please email us. The deadline is May 20, 2009.*