

Scripture Union Slovakia Newsletter

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Way to Bethlehem



In the moment, when summer and camp season ends, I've got the feeling, that Christmas is knocking on my door and I have to plan the next season, organize meetings and trainings as soon as possible. But at the same time we wish to stop. The desire to relax and have some rest is present. What is your desire right now? It is very good to have dreams and longing for something. It is OK to have a plan and organize stuff. But I have a question. How do you react when you've got, what you have desired?

As William Somerset Maugham said: The tragedy of life is that we get, after what we desire. If you have small kids, you know what they are dreaming about. It is all about a new toy, new Lego, new computer game or a puppy. When they are growing older, their desires become more complex and often more expensive.

When mentioning Christmas, I first think of Bethlehem. There are some desires connected with the city of Bethlehem.

Bethlehem, the city of David. David's desire for his home city was expressed in a time of Philistines oppression, when David was longing to drink fresh water from the well in Bethlehem. David's soldiers decided to fulfil David's desire. Risking their own life, they fought through the enemies' territory and brought fresh water to David. The whole text in 2 Samuel 23 is a record of mighty deeds of David's three heroes, but for me, what David did is the most important. He is holding his desire in his hands. But he can't drink it. He sees its precious value and soldiers' self-sacrifice. He poured water out as a sacrifice to the Lord.

When the prophet Micah had foreseen the birth of Messiah in this city, the city of David, eyes of whole Israel were turned to Bethlehem, from where they were expecting deliverance. When this moment happened and Israel desire was fulfilled, they denied it. And Peter, in his famous speech during first Pentecost convicted Israel from murder, murder of their fulfilled desire.

Two desires. Two fulfilled desires. Two different approaches.

We can have dreams. We can have desires. We desire love, friendship, understanding, partnership, marriage, we are dreaming to have kids, education, good job, success, health ... Many of our dreams might get fulfilled. But what will we do with our fulfilled desire?

Our desire in SU Slovakia is to live practically the big God's story among you, among children, young people, among families, in our work, in church and on the street as well. There are precious moments when we feel, this is happening and we are experiencing fulfilment of our desire. And in these moments we pray before God to be able to pour out these moments back to God for His glory.

Natália Luptáková
National Director SU Slovakia

Teen Games 2011

Two years ago we decided that in summer 2011 SU Slovakia will be hosting the international Teen Games – a project that can be said to have become some kind of tradition especially for Slovakia, Bulgaria and Serbia who have been part of it since the beginning in Athens 2008. Hosting the event is a great challenge but on the other hand it is an amazing opportunity to get involved more, invite more children and spread the word about the event.

Although we started the preparation more than a year ago, some things are just not possible to be done in advance. That's why the last two months before Teen Games were really intense and busy, full of making sure everything will work out as it should. Nonetheless we could not help being nervous, cooperation of 150 people from 4 different countries, most of them being teenagers is the kind of situation where you can expect unexpected to happen.

The first day of Teen Games was unusually quiet and calm as the group of 30 Slovak teenagers and 20 Slovak leaders were waiting for the crews from Bulgaria, Serbia and Poland to arrive. By the time of the next morning, the grounds at Tesáre were swarming with teenagers and everything was ready to set off. From that moment on the program just kept on unfolding and there was nothing else to do than enjoy it and make the most of it all.

The program of Teen Games has two key elements – sports and Bible teaching. The time we spent this year on our meeting with worship and bible teaching was in quite a small hall but we had awesome time anyway and the teens considered the worship time to be one of the highlights of the whole camp. Thanks to our big and international worship band!

We filled the time through-out the day with different matches in football, volleyball, streetball, table-tennis, chess and on the last day we even had competition in athletics. Those people, who were not playing any match, were usually cheering for their team, resting or enjoying their free time in the pool. Teenagers really considered it to be great that their daily program was not too full and they had enough time to get to know each other and experience the vibes of the atmosphere created by mixture of different cultures and backgrounds. We were diverse but we were similar as well. That's the picture you can see when four nations of Slavic origin meet.



Despite being a bit nervous about organizing big international TeenGames at the beginning, everything went really well and the teens left the campsite satisfied with some sport highs and some lows, hopefully inspired by the talks they heard or had between themselves, with a bunch of new friendships and their goodbye was only one sentence: „We'll see each other in London next year!“

English Bible Camp 2011

SU Slovakia has been preparing English Bible camps for children for more than ten years. It is something what we do every single year but every year it is a new experience, there is always something new we can learn or try. The team is always slightly different but as a result of all-year-long teambuilding activities we work together really well.

The big change this year was that Natalia who used to be the camp leader was this time more of an observer and supervisor as Miriam took over the role of leading. Natalia was finally sitting with her coffee watching the work being done, her dream has come true! :D



Even though all the parts of our regular daily program were the same as usually, they somehow were all really different or had at least a different element implemented. It was very exciting looking at things in a new way and it has brought real joy to the team when we discovered we are capable of doing things in another way than the one we were used to. The training during the year was focused mainly on developing our storytelling skills. The results of Natalia's and Miriam's work were really seen on the morning meetings where groups of three leaders presented a Bible story of the day. It was really great to see that the Bible stories were creative and different every day, involving kids, getting their attention through different senses. The greatest realisation was that this is only a beginning. There are hundreds of stories in the Bible ready to be told and retold in various ways. We have yet so many things to learn and try.



In this way crafts, sports and English lessons were transformed as well. It probably all had something to do with new people being responsible for these activities. It was a bit risky to let two boys be in charge of planning all the crafts of the week but it worked excellent and the kids enjoyed also the fact

they always had three different things to choose from. English Games were actually games and actually fun this year because they were supervised by a great woman, Sonya Halloway who teaches English in Slovakia for quite a long time and is still excited about her job :)

To increase the fun factor this year we lived through one of days of the week upside down. We started the day off with reading of the bedtime story and for dinner we had spaghetti. Yes, at 8am! :) It was just refreshing and fun.

I could keep on writing about all the other things we did as the adventurous trip, the night game, the water slide, the great worship setting and so one but I would probably go on forever. So I will add only one thought: Being creative and being a team is fun. Being a creative team bringing God's love to the lives of the kids is a bit scary but it is a privilege as well.



Lea Laurovičová

New challenges

I am grateful for the lasting tradition of English camps for children here in Slovakia. Of all the five camps I have been part of, each year, though, has been a reminder of the necessary challenge of moving forward. Either in finding new ways of storytelling, in accepting more responsibilities, or in decisions about the English aspect of the camps.

Having our adult questions and insecure areas, it is sometimes difficult to teach children about faith. We often have to admit we don't know the answers, nor that knowing God is easy. Children know when we're sincere and when we're not. It is only what's already in us that we can give to the children – nothing more.



The challenge I sensed this year was in how to teach children and lead them into worshipping God in a **meaningful** way. It might seem like an essential question that should be answered long before any camp, but we just find ourselves to be in a process of needing and finding these answers again and again every time we're with the children. Do our children really understand the Christian terminology we use, our thoughts and prayers we share and lyrics of the songs we sing?

Sometimes it is tempting to teach Christian *culture* instead of *faith*. We were hoping to move the attention of the children away from us, the leaders in front, to each other and especially to God. The last night of the camp brought a beautiful embodiment of this notion. The children followed their own initiative and stood facing each other while singing. We stayed left behind. And we loved it!



Looking around at our team of volunteers, I see people coming from different churches. I am really thankful for this ecumenical ministry. We all come with different ways of worshipping and praying, yet we love the same God. I believe this is one of the most valuable things we can give to these children and to each other.

I pray that we all grow in wisdom and humbly bring our own shaking faith to God and let Him use us as we are.



Miriam Halamičková

Trainings and teaching

As always in September, we participated in International workshops for workers with children, organized by Dep. of Theology at Pedagogical faculty of University in Banska Bystrica. Miriam's theme was Story as a mean of inner healing and Natalia's was focusing on How to improve Art of Bible Storytelling. Workshops are well attended by children's workers from whole Slovakia.



Big plans are now towards first Children's ministry Conference in November. The idea comes from similar conference in UK and the aim is to create a platform for all children's workers from Slovakia. We, as SU Slovakia will have their presentation about our ministry and lead a workshop as well.

Helping churches is one of our aim, so we are always happy when asked to help and inspire others teachers and volunteers. Natalia had an opportunity to open Sunday school year in Bardejov, small city in Eastern Slovakia with story of Josiah with the message of importance of regular Bible reading.



But there is also a need to train ourselves, we need to be inspired and encouraged as well. Miriam had an opportunity to go back to Uni and finish her Master degree, so she needs wisdom and strength to organize her time for work and study.

Natalia was offered to participate in training: How to work with GenY in workplace. Training was designed for business field and this point of view was very enriching, when working with young people as volunteers.

Plans for this year

We are very thankful for different areas we have been able to work in – from toddlers to university students. We have dear friends among the children we have spent time with.

Lately we've felt a growing passion for the youngest children and their mothers. It is almost unbelievable, how much a two year old can do! Make a pretty butterfly; listen to a story, exercise and make friends. Sometimes we ourselves are surprised by how much can be done with these little ones.



We decided to focus more on this ministry. We will be helping and preparing baby clubs in four different places. They include three different denominations, which brings up an opportunity to meet people from different churches and learn from each other.

Most of all we want to encourage young mothers into creative activities with their children get them together and serve them with God's love.

Miriam Halamičková

We appreciate your prayers and encouraging messages, as well as your financial support. We have a special account within Scripture Union England, If you want to make a donation directly into our bank account the details are:

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