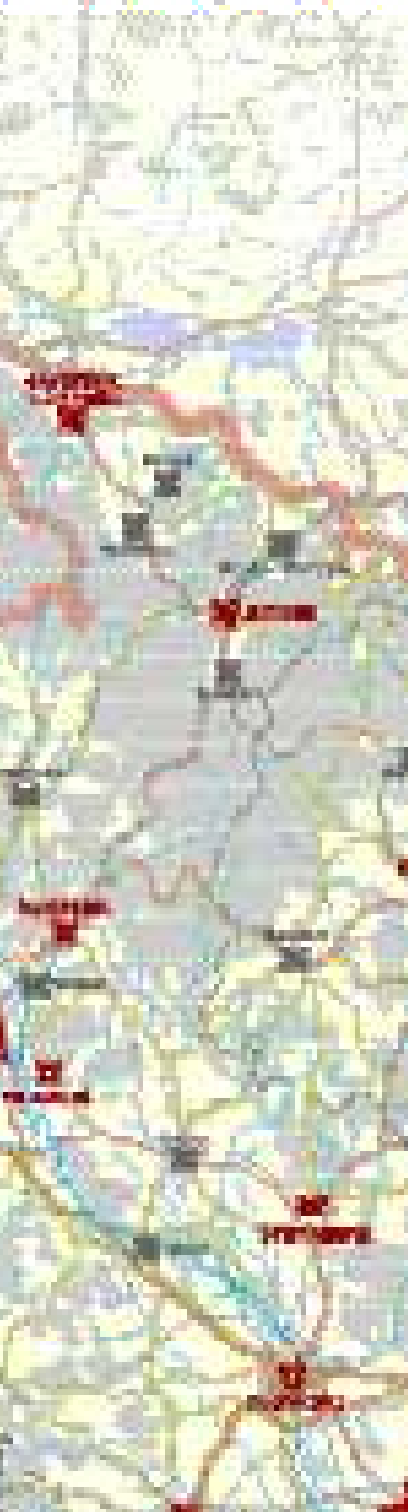


# THE PARDUBICE REGION





**P** The Pardubice Region borders on the Central Bohemia, Hradec Králové, Olomouc and Brno Regions. Its southern border touches the Vysočina Region and in the north, in the area of Králíky, it borders on the Polish Voivode of the Lower Silesia.

Around 520,213 inhabitants live in the area of 4,519 square kilometres. 60 percent of its territory is formed by agricultural land; industrial areas are centred around bigger towns. The regional capital of Pardubice is a seat of the region. The region is divided into 4 districts: Pardubice, Chrudim, Svitavy and Ústí nad Orlicí. The river Elbe flows through the northwestern part of the region and makes up the fertile lowlands of Polabí; in the south, there is the area of the Iron Mountains with the river Chrudimka and the Žďár Hills. Both of the mountains are protected landscape areas and they are both part of the Czech-Moravian Highlands. The Podorlická Upland starts to raise eastward where the rivers Divoká and Tichá Orlice flow. Southern part of the Orlické Mountains reaches the Pardubice Region and at the border with Poland, there is Kralický Sněžník (1,423 metres) which is the highest mountain of the Pardubice Region. There is also main European watershed between the North and the Black Sea (the river Morava springs under the massif of the Kralický Sněžník Mountain).

Besides beautiful and diverse nature we can also find many interesting towns and historical monuments in the Pardubice Region. Renaissance castle in Litomyšl is on the list of the UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century Litomyšl was an important centre of the Unity of Brethren. Composer Bedřich Smetana and painter Julius Mařák belong to the famous natives of the Pardubice Region.

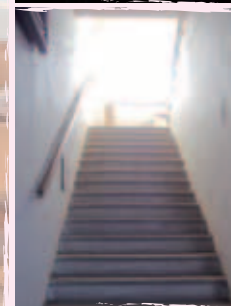
The Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren has a large number of congregations in the Pardubice Region; we will invite you to visit at least some of them.

# BOROVÁ U POLIČKY





RECTORY



The village of Borová lies in the northern edge of the Žďár Hills, 10 kilometres northwest of Polička at an altitude of around 600 metres. It spreads out along the Černý brook. Some of the houses in Borová have well-preserved features of peasant low houses (of so-called Polička type) where part of the house is made of wood and another is made of bricks.

The wooded landscape around Borová is ideal for summer and winter tourism. The highest mountain of this area is Bethlehem hill (748 metres). There is also a number of interesting historical monuments.

St. Margaret's Church and a small settlement nearby were founded by Benedictine Monks in 1349. At the turn of the 16th and the 17th centuries a stone church with a tower which is partly wooden were built here. The Neo-Gothic St. Catherine's Church was built in the upper part of the village at the end of the 19th century.

Shortly after issuing the Toleration Patent, in the year 1783 a congregation of Reformed confession was founded in Borová and in a sin-

gle month (from April till May 1783) a simple house of prayer without a tower was built. Its toleration character (after necessary repairs) is kept until now. Through the entrance which is placed on the lateral side of the building one can enter the prayer room with a pulpit which is on the wider side and has two rows of benches. The galleries, pulpit, Lord's table and benches are decorated with simple carvings. The organ dates back to the 19th century. The rectory building was built later and got its current appearance in 1913.

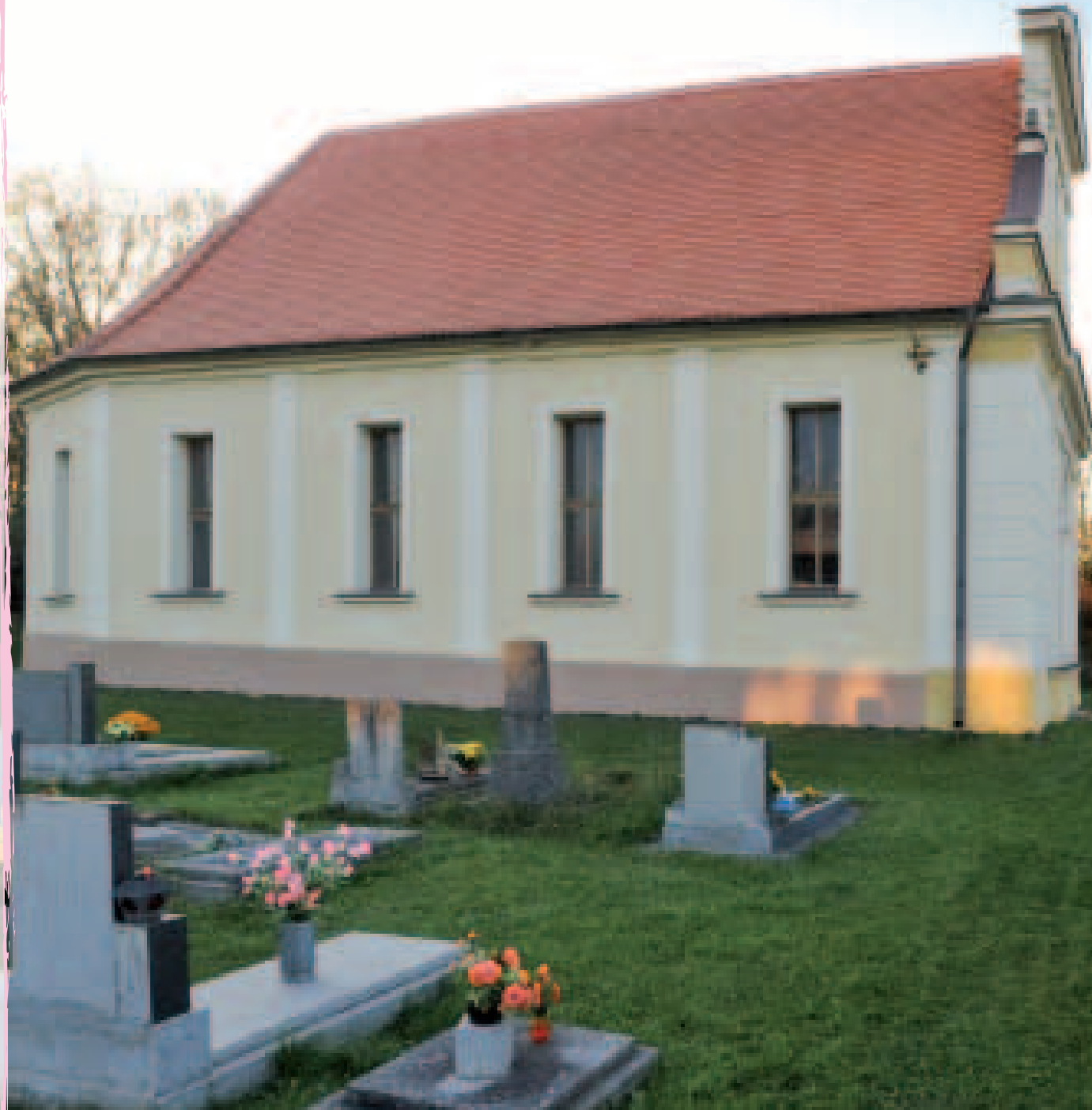
You may find interesting that the family of the former president Masaryk spent their summer holidays in the rectory in Borová. Tereza Nováková placed the story of her novel "Jiří Šmatlán" in Borová and its surroundings and Bohuslav Martinů, at that time 13 years old, made his first appearance as a violinist in the local restaurant "U Dostálů".



CHURCH



BUČINA • ROSE LEA



**P** Bučina is a small village in the Svitavy Upland at an altitude of 428 metres with a population of around 200 inhabitants. The whole region was once influenced by the Unity of Brethren in nearby Litomyšl and the persecution during the counter-Reformation period was particularly hard. Many of the until that time secret local Protestants joined the Reformed Confession after the declaration of the Toleration Patent. They initially met at Bureš's farm in Bučina. They were trying to get back the local Roman Catholic Church of St. James the Greater which was allegedly Protestant in the period before the Battle of the White Mountain but their effort failed.

For this reason a new congregation decided to build a new house of prayer in 1786 on the municipality land where a Protestant cemetery had been founded four years earlier. This house of prayer was simple, small and dark and a rectory was built soon afterwards. Later there were further improvements; in 1831 the organ was added, together with the Lord's table ten years later and the building also got a new roof. The new rectory, which was built in 1866 serves (after some repairs) up to the present day.

Substantial rebuilding of the original house of prayer in Bučina took place in 1833. The front shield, displaying chalice and inscription "Let Us Praise Our Lord," was built in the Renaissance style. The house of prayer got a new entrance door, windows and the interior was also improved. The pulpit was placed at the

front, behind the Lord's table, and the organ was built into the choir above the entrance. The house of prayer was rebuilt again later, most recently in 1996. It stands in the middle of the Protestant cemetery, which can be entered through a simple but impressive Neo-Renaissance gate.

At the end of 2003 the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic declared "the village of Bučina's toleration Protestant church with its surrounding wall, entry gate and cemetery" to be a protected site.

One of many memorable spots which are connected with a sad part of our history is Růžový palouček (Rose Lea). We can read in old chronicles that this meadow once belonged to the former peasant Jan Drábek from Bučina. It is a meadow where from time immemorial, rose bushes grow, which cannot be found anywhere else in the neighbourhood. They are called French roses (botanically named, *Rosa Gallica*). It is said that at this place the Czech Protestants bade farewell to their native country, which they had to leave during the era after the Battle of the White Mountain. In 1921 a monument with the names of the exiles who left to live abroad, designed by A. Metelák was unveiled here. At that time a ceremonial speech was given by writer Alois Jirásek.

In 1925 this area was turned into a park and in 1989 it was declared a cultural heritage site.



CHURCH AND RECTORY IN BUČINA





# HORNÍ ČERMNÁ



**P** Horní Čermná can be found in the eastern part of the Pardubice Region, to the north of Lanškroun. It is situated in beautiful, wooded countryside in Podorlicko region at an altitude of 421 metres. It is a typical valley village: around 1,500 people live in the valley which is 7 kilometres long. The first mention of Čermná is from the 14<sup>th</sup> century when it was inhabited by the German colonists. At this time the domain belonged to the diocese in Litomyšl. In 1421 the Hussites conquered Litomyšl and since then the Czech population which professed the Hussite faith and later also the faith of the Unity of Brethren, has prevailed. In the land register of 1536 the records are mostly in the Czech language. The bell of today's Roman Catholic Church has got Czech inscription and inscribed the year 1536. The family of Kostkas of Postupice bought the domain in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and they also supported the Utraquist faith. However, things changed in 1620 after the Battle of the White Mountain. Charles of Lichtenstein became the new owner of the domain. He performed, with the help of Jesuits, hard counter-Reformation measures. Many Protestants from Čermná left to live abroad in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Some of them found their home in German Rixdorf (a part of Berlin), others learnt about the foundation of the Restored Unity of Brethren in Herzhut (Ochranov in Czech) in Saxony and moved there. Those who remained, became the witnesses of the Toleration Patent by Joseph II in 1781.

The history of Čermná is closely linked with the history of the local Protestants, however, there were differences: the upper part of the village was Protestant, the lower part was Catholic. Čermná was divided into the Upper and Lower Čermná in 1935. The Protestant Reformed congregation in Čermná was founded in 1784 together with a preaching station in Čenkovice where the German Protestants predominated. At first divine service was held in a barn and soon, as the number of believers was increasing, it was necessary to find another solution.

The first house of prayer was built in 1786 and the rectory two years later.

In the thirties of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the original toleration house of prayer was not suitable anymore. After all the debates there was the only solution: to build a new house of prayer. The foundation stone was laid on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July, 1836. The construction of a one nave Neo-Classical house of prayer was led by M. Artct. At that time it was still required to comply with the rules of the toleration period: the building was not allowed to have a tower.

A new house of prayer was opened with ceremonial worship on October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1838. The tower was built in 1884 and bells were added later. All that remained was to build a new rectory and this was completed in 1894. After the formation of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, the congregation in Horní Čermná became a member of it and shared their common destiny.

The Second World War profoundly affected lives of the village and the congregation. After the German occupation in 1938, the Czech village of Horní Čermná became a part of the Greater German Empire. Preaching stations were cut off and the members of the congregation were separated. Liberation in 1945 brought new hope to all. It did not last very long...

Despite it, people in Čermná had the courage to overhaul the church in 1968. In later years, especially after November 1989, repairs continued. The result of these repairs is a beautifully decorated interior of the church, renewed decoration of the apse, pulpit and the installation of the precious organ which dates back to 1858. In the nineties of the last century there was a generous reconstruction of the rectory. Old Protestant families live in Horní Čermná almost from time immemorial. Their meetings are always a great event.





# HRADIŠTĚ





**P**In the protected landscape area of the Iron Mountains, near Nasavrky, there lies a small village of Hradiště (465 metres, 40 inhabitants). The traces of the Celtic fenced settlement (oppidum) from the first century before Christ are still visible.

In the period of the counter-Reformation, the Protestants secretly met in Hradiště and its neighbourhood. These Protestants (who formed a majority in this region) chose the Reformed confession after the declaration of the Toleration Patent. In 1783 they founded a congregation community and decided to build a house of prayer here. They obtained land on the outskirts of the village and according to the chronicler "It was probably the least neat land it was possible to find." The first house of prayer, which was built in 1787, was of a wooden construction, which began to deteriorate very quickly. Construction of a new, stone house of prayer, began in 1842, had yet to meet the toleration regulations. The congregation finally started to use it in 1847. It is a basic structure without a tower, simple inside and outside. In this form, after the necessary repairs, it remains until now. A rectory was built and also rebuilt later. Despite the difficulties, a school was built in

the Hradiště congregation in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is used until now; in the nineties there was a general reconstruction and the building is used not only by members of the congregation but it is also frequently visited by children and teenagers during summer camps. An interesting feature is the wooden belfry next to the house of prayer. It was built in 2009 and it contains a bell which was donated by the Dutch Protestants.

In 1915, in commemoration of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Jan Hus (the father of the Czech Reformation) his memorial was built in Hradiště.

The preaching station in Klokočov belongs to the local congregation and in 1934 a simple church with a small turret was built there. A Divine service takes place here in summer.

Thousand years old lime tree, also called Klokočovská or Royal, is a precious natural monument in Klokočov. It is 19 metres high and its circumference is 888 centimetres. It used to be a border tree on the medieval, so called "Libice trail". According to the legend, Charles IV supposedly rested under this tree on his way from the Lichnice castle.



# KROUNA



**P** Krouna (560 metres above sea level) is a village in the Pardubice Region, has around 1,400 inhabitants, lies in the northern edge of the protected landscape area of the Žďár Hills. If you drive from Hlinsko to Polička, you will see a large church on the left hand side of the road. This church belonged to a Protestant congregation in Krouna which, after the declaration of the Toleration Patent in 1781, was founded here as the first Reformed congregation in Bohemia. The earliest record of the village is from 1349 when its joining to the Litomyšl bishopric was discussed.

Krouna spreads around the Krounka brook and there are some important monuments of folk architecture still preserved, such as Bukáček's farm which dates back to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The residents were mainly farmers; but there was also a lot of forestry work. It was common that people wove and embroidered at home. The famous production of painted wooden toys is still undertaken.

The Catholic Church of St. Michael the Archangel was built in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and replaced a Gothic church built in 1350. In the church a valuable font from the 16<sup>th</sup> century was preserved. Among the famous natives of Krouna is the inventor, František Křižík. The writer Tereza Nováková favoured this region and drew inspiration for her work from here.

The foundation of the Protestant congregation in Krouna was supported by the then owner of the Rychmburk domain, Count Philip Kinský. Protestants began to gather secretly here in large numbers. The Count arranged the arrival of the Reformed priest, František Kovacs from Hungary and the first sermon was held in the barn "U Šimonů" in September 1783.

Then toleration houses of prayer grew rapidly. Construction of a house of prayer in Krouna began in April 1784; was completed in May and on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July the first divine service was held here. The original house of prayer has served for ninety years.

In 1874 it was decided to build a new church. Construction, however, cost more than expected because it was built on a swampy terrain which had to be strengthened and drained. A three nave church with 52 metres high tower (both designed in a historicist style by František Schmoranz) was built. The construction was completed in 1878. The church interior is simple but impressive. In the apse there is beautifully carved Lord's table and a decorated pulpit, both the work of author and carver J. Podstata. A valuable two manual, concert organ, made by Josef Prediger of Albrechtsdorf, is situated in the gallery. The church is listed as a state protected monument.

The rectory was often rebuilt and the last time it was rebuilt in a Neo-Renaissance style at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The designer was the Viennese architect Josef Zlatohlávek. The rectory serves the congregation in its present form until now.

After 1918, the congregation got new members thanks to the conversion movement. The congregation was badly affected by the war years: the then rector Karel Anderle and his wife were imprisoned and he could continue his work only after the liberation of the Republic. The year 1989 brought new impetus not only to the congregation but to the whole community. In nearby Skuteč there is a preaching station of the congregation in so called "Tomášek's house" which was the birthplace of the composer J. V. Tomášek. The congregation bought the house in 1988 and therein established a house of prayer.

The congregation of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren in Svratouch will be connected to Krouna congregation in January 2011. The church in Svratouch was built in 1784 as a toleration house of prayer; it was rebuilt in an Art Nouveau style in 1912 and a tower was later added to the building. Children and young people stay in the nearby rectory during the summer months.



LETOHRAD • KUNVALD • PÍŠAŘOV

LETOHRAD





**P** Until 1950 Letohrad was called Kyšperk after the defunct castle on a hill above the town. It lies on the foothills of the Orlické Mountains on the river Tichá Orlice at an altitude of 360 metres. More than 6,000 people live there. The first written mention of Kyšperk is registered in the Zbraslav Chronicle. In the year 1513 it is already featured as a town. Kyšperk had its largest boom in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The then owner Hynek Jetřich Vitanovský had a castle and a chapel built in a Baroque style; it is today's Baroque Church of St. Wenceslas and has unique stucco decoration. The author of the altar painting of the death of this saint is the Viennese painter Charles Sambach. The English style castle built between 1820 and 1830 dominates the square. No less valuable is a listed castle park in which there are many rare trees and an imperial pavilion. In the year 1713 a plague epidemic threatened the town and as an expression of gratitude that this did not happen a Plague Column was built in the square.

After 1989 a new life came to the town. Baroque merchant houses with arcades came into being and a former farmstead from 1720 was restored and today it houses a museum of crafts.

Letohrad has been a preaching station of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren in Horní Černá since 1921. Local Protestants were supported by new members from the "conversion movement", however, there was no place to meet. Difficult situation also continued during the Second World War.

An official congregation in Letohrad was founded in 1956 and in the following year the Protestants finally gained a congregation house which only partially met their needs. The construction of a new congregation house started only after the year 1989. This modern two-story house was designed by architect Z. Auer and was inaugurated in 2003. The concept of the building was interesting: an airy house of prayer opens itself in the space under the roof, there are rooms for activities of the congregation and a flat for a preacher. There is also possibility of further accommodation. Congregation house in Letohrad is the first church building built since the seventies of the last century.

The congregation in Letohrad has a preaching station in a distant Písařov, a small town

with 7,100 inhabitants. Despite the distance, religious service is held there every week. With in the conversion movement, in 1925 a preaching station, which belonged to the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren in Hrabová was formed in Písařov, later in Zábřeh na Moravě and finally in 1997 it became a preaching station of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren congregation in Letohrad. In this small village there is one of the most outstanding buildings of the architect Oldřich Liska – a functionalist Protestant church with a chalice on the tower. It has been standing here since 1933 and it is a pity that only a few people know about it.

Near Žamberk, in the eastern part of the Orlické Mountains, a small village of Kunvald with just over 1,000 inhabitants lies at an altitude of 445 metres. It was founded in the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the first written record comes from 1363 and the road from Bohemia to Silesia and Glacensis led here. From 1389 it belonged to Litice domain. Kunvald has a great historical significance for the Protestants. A religious group which separated from both the Catholic Church and the Utraquist Church took refuge in Litice domain which belonged to George of Poděbrady. Members of this religious group inclined to the teaching of Peter Chelčický and wanted to live exclusively according to the Gospel.

The Unity of Brethren was founded in Kunvald in 1458 and its undeniable historical significance applies to these days. The Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren bought a house called "At the Congregation" in 1929. There is a monument of the Unity of Brethren and of the last bishop J. A. Komenský in this house. His statue was built in the vicinity of the house already in 1910.

Near Kunvald there is a place called Praying Valley. This is where members of the Unity of Brethren took refuge in times of persecution. A road to the valley leads through so called Bethlehem, a part of Kunvald where most of the members used to live. There is a lime tree called the "Lime of Brethren," which is estimated to be 450 years old and is considered a relic of the Unity of Brethren. It is said that the tree was planted during the forced departure of the Czech Brethren from their homeland in 1547 – 1548.



KUNVALD



LETOHRAD



PÍSAŘOV





PARDUBICE



**P**A statutory town of Pardubice, the regional capital of the Pardubice Region is located in the Polabská Lowland on the confluence of the Elbe and the Chrudimka rivers. About 90,000 inhabitants live here. It is worth noticing a nearby phonolite hill, the Kunětická Mountain which has a rich history. There are nice views from this place.

In 1295 in the place of today's Pardubice, the pope Bonifác confirmed the origin of the monastery of the Knights of the Red Cross and St. Bartholomew's Church. In 1340 a small town was in the property of the lords of Pardubice. The first Prague archbishop, mentor and friend of Charles IV Ernest of Pardubice came from this family. In 1359 he founded the Annunciation of Our Lady's Church in Pardubice.

The biggest prosperity came in the 16<sup>th</sup> century when Pardubice became the property of Vilém of Pernštejn. He was one of the most powerful Czech noblemen. At that time he had an old water castle rebuilt into the Gothic chateau. He also decided about the character of the construction of the town. In 1510 he had St. John the Baptist's Church built for the Utraquist believers. His sons continued building the chateau in the Renaissance style. It became the architectural specificity of well preserved transition between Gothic and Renaissance styles. The Green Tower from 1507 is a part of the fortification. In that time St. Bartholomew's Church was also repaired. After a big fire in 1538 the square with mostly Renaissance houses was newly built.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Pardubice became a property of the Royal Chamber. It however meant the beginning of its slow decline. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries wars and fires played their role, too. The 19<sup>th</sup> century finally brought new prosperity of the town especially thanks to introducing of the railway in 1845. Pardubice became a traffic crossroad, industry and culture life began to develop. In 1874 the first horse races took place here – the Great Pardubice Steeplechase. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the synagogue was built according to father and son Schmoranzs' design. The building survived war years; in the end of the 1950s it was demolished.

In 1911 Pardubice aviator Jan Kašpar flew from Pardubice to Prague for the first time. In the 1920s architect Pavel Janák built a crematorium in an Art-deco style.

The war years affected Pardubice and its surroundings very seriously. In June 1942 a village Ležáky was burned as a reprisal for the assassination of Reich Protector Reinhard Heydrich. The Czech patriots suffered and they were executed in the famed Zámeček (Small chateau) in Pardubice. Ležáky is a national cultural monument. Nowadays, after years of stagnation Pardubice is a lively town with respect to its history. An old part of the town together with the chateau has been a Historic Town Reserve since 1964.

The beginnings of Pardubice Protestant congregation date back to the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when a preaching station of the Protestant congregation in Dvakačovice was founded in Pardubice. Soon after, there came a decision to build a new church in a Neo-Renaissance style. A building site was bought and the church began to grow in the corner of Sladkovského and Hronovická Street. Prague builder Matěj Blecha was an author of the design. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of June 1897 the church was solemnly consecrated. The congregation of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (ECCB) was established in 1920. The Second World War hit the calm life of the congregation very cruelly. Some members of the congregation died in the concentration camps or they were executed in "Small chateau" in Pardubice. In 1944 some congregation members became the victims of the air-raid.

In the post war era the effort of the congregation was focused except congregation and worship work on obtaining a rectory and repair of the church. Nowadays, it is a pleasure to look at the whole prayer room, a wooden pulpit in the front and the Lord's table. In 1952 the new organ was acquired. The interior of the church was modified in the 1960s and later also in 2004. In the rectory in Sladkovského Street there is a nice congregation hall and a flat for preacher. In the recent years the congregation garden was arranged purposefully and beautifully, indeed.



# Políčka



**P**A town of Polička (554 metres above sea level; over 9, 000 inhabitants) is used to be called the entrance gate into the protected landscape areas of the Žďár Hills. In 1265 Přemysl Otakar II founded Polička at then significant Trstenická Trail. Since 1305 it was a dowry town of the Czech queens. Early Gothic St. James's Church was founded at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It however suffered by many fires which affected Polička during the centuries. It had to be demolished after a devastating fire in 1835; in the 1860<sup>s</sup> it was again built in the Neo-Gothic style according to František Schmoranz's design. Sculptor Václav Levý made St. James's altar statue. The medieval fortification around the whole town has been preserved until now. St. Michael's Church and a prismatic belfry in the cemetery come from the Renaissance period.

In the following centuries wars and fires were devastating the town. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, in the Baroque period the town started to develop. The Baroque town hall with a Gothic tower from the 15<sup>th</sup> century is very valuable. There is St. Mary's column from the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century on the square.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries club life became to develop. Famous Polička native, composer Bohuslav Martinů was born in a small sitting-room in the tower of St. James' Church on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December 1890. He is buried at the local cemetery.

The year 1989 brought new impulses for development of Polička. The historical centre of the town is a Historic Town Zone.

Many secret Protestants used to gather in the surroundings of Polička. After the declaration of the Toleration Patent there was however only one person in Polička itself who officially

professed a Reformed faith. Number of the Protestants was rising with the development of the town. In 1890 a branch congregation was established here and joined the Reformed congregation in Telecí. Later in 1915 it joined the congregation in Borová which was easier to reach by newly built railway. In the 1930<sup>s</sup> many new members were coming and the house with a house of prayer which was bought in 1899 was not sufficient anymore. The congregation owned building site from long time ago but the construction of the church began as late as in the year 1936. According to Prague architect Bohumír Kozák's design, Polička builder Josef Mach built a spacious pure functionalist building with a prominent square tower with a chalice on it. A broad staircase leads to the entrance door of the church. Inside we will find apart from the worship hall also rooms for meetings of the seniors as well as rooms for the activity of children and youth. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of July 1937, in a day of Master Jan Hus' anniversary, during the ceremonial worship the church was handed over for using by a former Synodical Senior Josef Souček.

The war years were very hard for the Polička congregation. After the war new inhabitants began to come to Polička. Many Protestants were among them, too. In 1946 an independent congregation of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (ECCB) was established in Polička. In the following years a rectory was added to the church. Despite later disfavour of the regime, the congregation lived on and its members took care of not only the spiritual growth but they also look after their church which is an example of the building serving various activities of the live congregation.



# PROSEČ U SKUTČE





**P** At the boundary of the Iron Mountains and the Svitavy Upland, 9 kilometres southeast of Skuteč lies a small town Proseč (523 metres above sea level). Over 2,000 inhabitants live here. For the first time, Proseč is mentioned in 1349. The country was poor, owners of the domain were changing whether it was the Benedictines or families living from the 14<sup>th</sup> century at the mighty castle of Rychmburk. The Hussite movement was spreading rapidly here and later the teaching of the Unity of Brethren had a big influence, too. They had a strong congregation in a nearby Litomyšl.

As everywhere in the Czech Lands, the era after the Battle of the White Mountain meant the end of a confessional freedom and recatholization. However, many secret Protestants were hiding around Proseč. After the declaration of the Toleration Patent the history of the Protestant congregation in Proseč started.

St. Nicholas's Gothic Church comes from the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. However, it was rebuilt several times. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century Proseč became a small town with typical country cottages; a school cottage was built on the square. In the 1820s the production of pipes began to develop and made Proseč famous.

In 1903 writer Tereza Nováková with her husband bought a house in Proseč. She loved this county and she drew inspiration for her works from this region (her novels-for example- Jiří Šmatlán, Jan Jílek, Children of the Clean Alive One). Her friends visited Proseč, other artists and politicians arrived here, too. Tereza Nováková lived here till her death and her son dr. Arne Novák often visited her here. The 20<sup>th</sup> century was an era of progress and development but already at that time the situation was becoming worse for Europe. In 1935 and 1936 a citizenship of Proseč was granted to the German writers Heinrich and Thomas Mann who escaped together with their families from Hitler's Germany. The Second World War pressed Proseč very hard. There were many victims among partisans and among civilians, too. The era of the communist regime was not easy, either.

The inhabitants of Proseč as well as the members of the Proseč congregation of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren welcome November 1989 as a new and hopeful challenge.

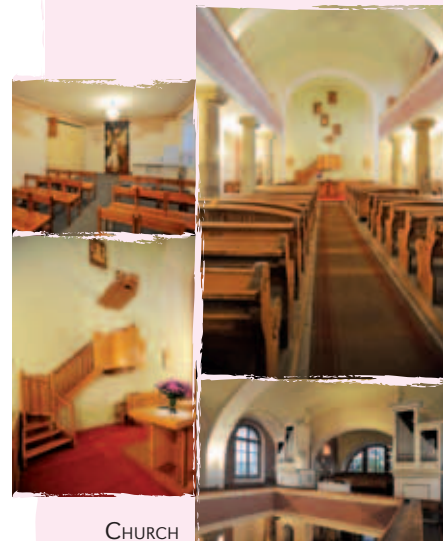
The Reformed congregation in Proseč was founded in 1783. The first worship was held in a farm. More and more people were coming and thus the wooden floor of the attic was removed in order that all the people could see and hear the worship well as if it was from the choir. A small rectory was quickly built near the future house of prayer. The raised rock place was assigned for the church – that was the worst possible place. Already in 1784 a small house of prayer according to the toleration rules stood there. The second house of prayer was built in the Empire style, it was consecrated on the 8<sup>th</sup> of July 1838. The planned construction of a tower has never been realized.

The building has nice semi-circular windows that fill it with light. The strong columns hold the galleries which are connected with the choir where an organ is placed. The pews are beautifully carved with arch-like backrest. In the 1960s the inner alterations were done in the church. Protestant minister Jiří Zejfart was an author of the alteration plans. The Lord's table and pulpit are modern. There are woodcarvings in the front wall. They were done by the local woodcarver Ladislav Rejent and they symbolize Christian faith and are accompanied by Jesus Christ's words about peace.

The original rectory had to be replaced by a new one which underwent number of alterations, too. In 1986 an extension construction was completed, there is a congregation hall now. A neglected rocky place where the house of prayer was built, finally became its advantage. The house of prayer, although without a tower, stands on a hill-top and it is visible from afar. There is an inscription saying "Lord's House" and the year 1783 above a beautiful entrance door.



FORMER PROTESTANT SCHOOL



CHURCH





# ŠLOUPNICE





**P** Sloupnice, a long village along a road from Ústí nad Orlicí to Vysoké Mýto was founded in the 13<sup>th</sup> century by Václav II. The White Swan (Bílá labuť) brook flows through this municipality with almost 2,000 inhabitants and an altitude of 390 metres. The swan is also in the emblem of Sloupnice.

The Kostkas of Postupice family owned the municipality. Later it belonged to the Pernštejns. In 1554–1848 Sloupnice belonged to Litomyšl. Many Protestants lived in Sloupnice and in the surroundings, also thanks to the congregation of the Unity of Brethren in Litomyšl. A local church was Protestant, too. After the Battle of the White Mountain it was abandoned.

In the era of persecution during the counter-Reformation, Jesuits behaved the worst. The Toleration Patent was received with relief even though its observance by the authorities was not without problems.

The Protestant congregation of the Reformed confession was founded in Sloupnice also for the surrounding villages in 1783. A place for a house of prayer was already found, too. The nobility however ordered that it had to stand in a nearby Džbánov. They had only a rectory in Sloupnice but meanwhile, in 1795 they also could build a house of prayer. It stands on the same level as the Catholic church and until now it has been an example of the classical toleration house of prayer. Today there is a small foyer with a chalice under the volute gable. Later changes which had been done during repairs did not disturb its toleration style.

Eventhough, today's congregation is weakened especially by a migration of the inhabitants, its members faithfully attend their toleration house of prayer and they care for it.



TELECÍ





Telecí can be found in a protected landscape area of the Žďár Hills near Polička. The municipality lies in a valley which is 6 kilometres long, at an altitude of 578 metres above sea level. There live about 400 permanent inhabitants.

Telecí was probably founded by the colonists who were invited here to protect a royal town of Polička and at that time very important Trstenice (it used to be called "Royal") land trail. In the middle of the forests a settlement was founded and in 1403 it was already mentioned as a congregation settlement.

The inhabitants of east Bohemia mostly belonged to the Utraquist church or to the Unity of Brethren which had a seat in Litomyšl. During the Thirty Years' War and later in a period of a forced recatholization, many Protestant families were hiding in the forests of the Czech-Bohemian Highlands. Special buildings-courts, closed from all four sides without front windows were built to provide security during the gatherings. In Telecí there are some folk architecture buildings which are the protected sites, for example court number 16.

The Church of St. Mary Magdalena has a special story. At the beginning, this Gothic church from the 14<sup>th</sup> century belonged to still undivided church; after the Hussite wars the worship of the Utraquist church took place here and in a post-White-Mountain period it was recatholized. The church is surrounded by a wall and by loopholes and has a belfry from the 16<sup>th</sup> century which was a part of the defense system of that time.

In Telecí they have a very valuable tree – a singing lime tree which is called Lukáš'lime. Its age is estimated to be 700 years, its height is 25 metres and its circuit is almost 12 metres. According to a legend, a member of the Czech Brethren was staying here and singing psalms. It sounded as if the lime itself was singing...

After the declaration of the Toleration Patent the Protestants in Telecí and its surroundings immediately professed their Helvetic confession – already in November 1781 that was 92 families. When in 1782 a permission to establish a congregation was granted, at that time they already had a place for a construction of a house of prayer. It is said that they chose a field where the flax was in blossom. Next day, women pulled the flax out and within a short time in the autumn 1873 a stone house of prayer surrounded by a wall already stood on that place. A cemetery was established behind the house of prayer. A rectory was being built simultaneously; a congregation hall was added as late as in the year 1931.

In the following years, the house of prayer which has still been keeping its toleration character, was not sufficient anymore. Finally, the construction of a new church was not realized; a Neo-Renaissance front and a wide square tower were added on the side facing the valley. The additional construction was finished in 1890. Thanks to broad-minded minister Josef Martínek, the congregation in Telecí also looked after the orphanage for boys which was opened in the 1880<sup>s</sup>.

During the following years the Telecí congregation, since 1918 the ECCB congregation, was living and working in peace. The Second World War however interrupted the calm period. The congregation members including its minister Otokar Kadlec and his wife joined the revolt activities.

The communist regime period did not bring peace, either. Informal meetings of the ministers were monitored by secret police. During recent years the rectory underwent an extensive reconstruction. In 1995 the Telecí congregation got its new preaching station, a former congregation in Pustá Rybná. The local worship take place in a small church from the 1990<sup>s</sup>.



CONGREGATION HOUSE



# TRNÁVKA • CHVALETICE

TRNÁVKA





Trnávka is a small municipality in the Polabí region, in the middle of the way between Kolín and Přelouč. There are not many records about Trnávka, we

just know that the first record comes from the year 1333. At an altitude of 204 metres there live 208 inhabitants. If you would like to make a trip around the surroundings, you can visit a nearby Kladruhy nad Labem with a famous stud. There is also a Renaissance castle from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, later it was rebuilt in a Baroque style. In Řečany nad Labem you will find St. Mary Magdalene's Romanesque church with a Romanesque baptismal font.

In Trnávka and its surroundings the secret Protestants were surviving (in a nearby Chvaletice they gathered in a fortress cellar in Telčice) and in 1782 they joined the Augsburg confession. At the beginning they gathered in a barn for worship but already in May 1783 a wooden house of prayer was built. Maybe it was the first one in the Czech Lands. It did not last long. New one, this time made of stone, was built ten year later. The first worship was held here in May 1797. When the toleration restrictions were not valid anymore, the inhabitants of Trnávka wanted to improve the house of prayer but it appeared that it was not possible. So they built the third one, it was a stone Neo-Renaissance church with a tower. It was solemnly opened on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 1884. Since that time, after various repairs it has been serving up to the present day.

The congregation uses a nice ground floor rectory built in 1925. Besides the room for wor-

ship which serves as a winter house of prayer we can find here recently repaired rooms which serve the needs of the live congregation. There is also a flat for a preacher at the rectory.

In connection with the congregation of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (ECCB) in Trnávka, we must mention a nearby church in Chvaletice. In the village – the first written record of which dates back to the year 1393 – the secret Protestants also used to gather and already in 1782 they formed a congregation, the second oldest Reformed congregation in Bohemia. The first preacher Josef Jesenius came from Hungary. Already in 1783 there was a toleration house of prayer. A cemetery was founded around it and even a rectory was there. On the place of the original house of prayer a nice one nave Neo-Classical church with a tower was built according to M. Blecha's design between the years 1880–1882.

The 1950<sup>s</sup> negatively affected the life of Chvaletice. Manganese and pyrite mine completely separated the upper and lower part of the village. The nice Protestant church with a few houses remained isolated on the hill. In 1974 a construction of the electric power plant in Chvaletice changed the whole countryside, too. To this electric power plant coal was transported on the Elbe from the north Bohemia.

The congregation in Chvaletice does not have its preacher. Recently, the church was however repaired and hopefully better future can be expected.



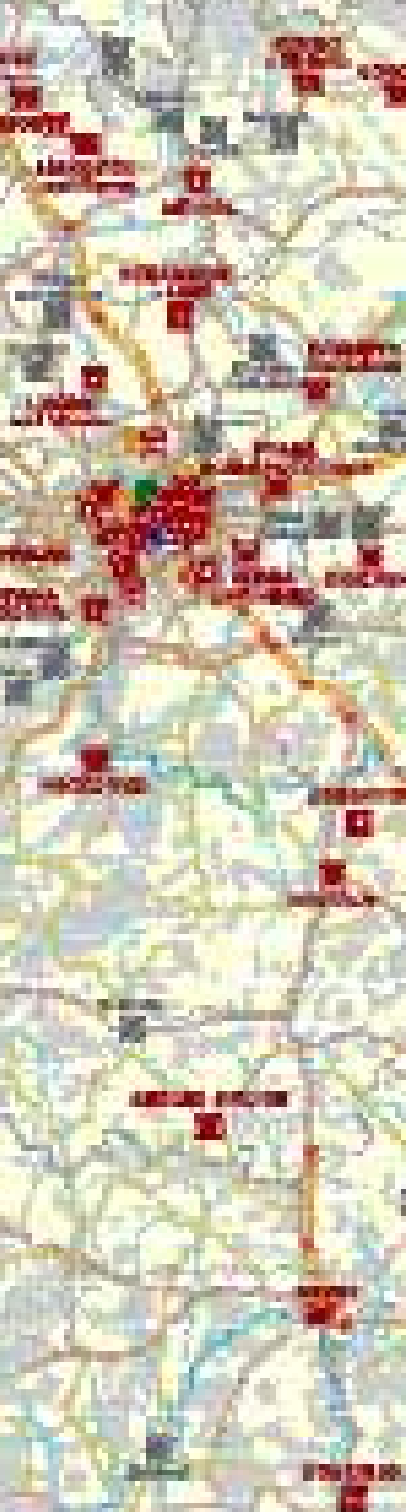
RECTORY AND  
CHURCH IN  
TRNÁVKA





# THE PLZEŇ (PILSEN) REGION





**P** The Pilsen Region, located in the south-west of Bohemia is the third largest region of the Czech Republic with its territory of 7,561 square kilometres. It has 581,175 inhabitants. Towards the interior it borders on the Carlsbad Region, the Central Bohemia and South Bohemia; it has the longest border with Bavaria.

The region is rich in natural beauties. The Český les (the Bohemian Forest) and Šumava with a part of the National park create much-frequented and from the point of view of tourism an interesting border zone. Deep forests hide such natural treasures as Black and Devil's Lakes (Černé a Čertovo jezero). The name of the highest mountain of this area is Velká Mokrůvka and its height is 1,370 metres.

The Pilsen hilly country which creates the centre of the Pilsen Region is rich in rivers. Mže, Úhlava, Úslava and Radbuza meet each other in Pilsen and later they create one river-Berounka. The river Otava flows across the eastern part of the region.

There is an inexhaustible richness of historical monuments in Pilsen. Domažlice and Horšovský Týn are the Historical Town Reserves. Further, let us at least mention a Baroque-Gothic Cathedral in Kladruhy – a work of an outstanding Baroque builder J. B. Santini. Worth mentioning is also Kašperk, Rábí or Velhartice. There are for sure many more monuments and you can find them in all seven districts of the Pilsen Region.

And a region of Chodsko ! Distinct ethnographic region with a rich and long history, with still vivid traditions, famous local ceramics, bagpipes, special dialect. How many poets were glorifying this region, how many writers were writing about it ! The people of the Chodsko region were given a royal privilege to guard a troubled border. This privilege was confirmed by the "Royal Majesties". During the revolt of the local people Jan Sladký-Kozina gave down his life for them in the year 1695.

In Pilsen we will find two congregations of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (ECCB). We will visit Domažlice and Merklín which create a congregation union with Přeštice. The other ECCB congregations in the Pilsen Region have their own interesting history, too. They are in Černošín, Dolní Bělá, Chrást near Pilsen, Kralovice, Podbořany, Rokycany and in Stříbro.

So, Happy journey !

DOMAŽLICE



**P**“Domažlice is a lovely little town,” are the words of a song from the region of Chodsko. And the song is right. Domažlice (428 metres above sea level, almost 11,000 inhabitants), located only 16 kilometres from the German border is a traditional centre of the Chodsko region. Famous villages of Chodsko – Klenčí, Postřekov, Újezd, Trhanov or Draženov are situated at the foothill of Čerchov (1,041 metres) which is a part of the Bohemian Forest. It is not far from Domažlice.

The original settlement on the old country trail was mentioned already in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. In the 60<sup>s</sup> of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, under the reign of Přemysl Otakar II, the settlement became a town. At that time the fortification was built and it was partly preserved until the present.

During the Hussite period Domažlice was on the side of the Taborites. At the famous Battle of Domažlice in 1431 the crusaders were defeated – in fact they ran away before the battle. In the year 1618 the wing represented by the town of Domažlice joined the revolt of the Bohemian Estates. During the Thirty Years’ War Domažlice was badly damaged and declined. Only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century its development slowly started.

The Munich Agreement from 1938 had a very negative effect also on the region of Domažlice. The town itself remained under the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, many villages however became a part of the Great German Empire. The liberation was brought by the American army in May 1945. The joy of freedom however did not last long – in the year 1948 the borders were closed and the iron curtain was launched for a long period of forty years. Only November 1989 brought a desired release.

A round late-Gothic tower which was also a part of the defensive system, dominates the town. It is 56 metres high and has three bells in a belfry which is on the very top of the tower. In its vicinity there is a Gothic Dean’s Church of St. Mary, rebuilt in a Baroque style in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Lower Gate also dates back to the period of the original fortification. The main square is long and we can find here many merchants’ houses from the 14<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> century as well as a pseudo-Renaissance town hall from the year 1891. From Chodský hrad Castle, established by Přemysl Otakar II there is only an original tower that remained. Later the castle was rebuilt in a Baroque style and now it

serves as the Chodsko regional museum. Worth mentioning is also the Augustinian monastery with a church which was originally Gothic, later rebuilt in a Baroque style.

The historical centre of Domažlice is a Historic Town Reserve. Each year in August the Festival of Chodsko region takes place in Domažlice.

The congregation of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (ECCB) in Domažlice was established after World War I within a framework of so called conversion movement when many Catholics influenced by the mood of that time were leaving the Catholic church. Thanks to the tireless work of a minister Karel Machotka the preaching stations in Domažlice, Kdyně, Staňkov and in Kout were established. In the year 1923 these preaching stations formed a congregation with a seat in Domažlice. In the year 1924 a building was bought and rebuilt into a congregation house with a flat for the minister. This building served the congregation for many years. Its members spent here a hard time of World War II which also brought life losses in a revolt group. Miloš Bič, minister of a congregation in Domažlice was imprisoned in a concentration camp during the war.

After the war the congregation in Domažlice was strengthened by the Czech and Slovak Protestants. Minister Miloš Bič was called on to the Evangelical Theological Faculty in Prague where he worked as a senior lecturer and later as a significant professor.

The idea to build their own church in Domažlice appeared already before World War II. A lot above the town park was already purchased. Nevertheless, the construction was realized as late as in the years 2007–2008. The congregation members decided to realize the wish of their fathers and they built a new church in a Modernist style according to the architectural design of architect Schejbal and Z. Wolf. An impressive building was built, set in the green area of a park, with a big light house of prayer, with a flat for a preacher and with a small sweetshop for public. A bell from a deserted church in Rokytník in east Bohemia was placed on the tower of a new church. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of November 2008 the first ceremonial Divine service was served. In the same year this church was declared a “Building of the year in the Pilsen Region”.



# MERKLÍN NEAR PŘEŠTICE





**P** At a distance of about 10 kilometres from Přeštice, in predominantly agricultural region, lies a town of Merklín (385 metres above sea level, approx. 1,000 inhabitants). Not far from here we will find Merklín lake, a small river Merklínka flows through the municipality.

Already in 1356 a small town with a church and a fortress was mentioned. Negative events of the Thirty Years' War caused its desolation. The owners of the domain were also changing. Let us remember the Morzin family; at that time the small town began to flourish again. The Pálffy family lived in a castle, a typical feudal residence (firstly mentioned probably as early as in the 17<sup>th</sup> century) until the year 1945. A Roman Catholic Church of St. Nicholas comes from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, it was rebuilt in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In the year 1685 a Jewish cemetery was founded here.

So called conversion movement which was rather strong in the Pilsen Region after the First World War enabled a foundation of a congregation of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (ECCB) in Přeštice and Merklín became its preaching station. In the year 1931 a seat of the congregation was however transferred to Merklín. Already in 1930 a foundation stone of a very modern church at that time was laid. The church had a spacious room for Divine service and other rooms for gatherings and a flat for a preacher. The church started to serve its purpose in June 1931. The original church tower was partly wooden and the bells were hanged inside. The combination of wood and masonry was also used for the interior adjustments. In the 50<sup>s</sup> of the last century a new brick tower was built. The church is surrounded by a nice garden.

Congregations in Merklín and Přeštice creates a union. Therefore it is also good to men-

tion at least briefly the congregation in Přeštice. It was founded already in the year 1923, during the years it was a preaching station of Merklín and in the year 1946 it became an independent congregation again. It was not possible to think of a construction of a new church at that time; therefore the congregation members bought and adjusted a former synagogue and a congregation house. In the year 1974 both buildings were however demolished, they had to make a place for other constructions. These days, the activity of the congregation is concentrated in the congregation house which was built from a family house. Nevertheless, the Protestants of Přeštice did not fully give up the idea of building their own church.

One of the most valuable monuments of Přeštice is a Baroque pilgrimage Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, built in the years 1750–1775. Its builder was Kilián Ignác Dienzenhofer. The author of the altar painting of the Assumption is J. J. Redlmayer. The oldest bell comes from the year 1468. It is interesting that both towers of the church were definitely finished as late as in the 90<sup>s</sup> of the 20<sup>th</sup> century during the reconstruction of the church.

Near the church there is a memorial of a musical composer J. J. Ryba who was born in Přeštice on the 16<sup>th</sup> of October 1765. It is probably not even necessary to mention his famous Christmas mass "Hey, Master". Another prominent native is Josef Hlávka who was born here on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 1831 and who was an architect and a significant patron.





DILSEN – HUS – WESTERN CONGREGATION



**P** Regional capital of the Pilsen Region and the forth biggest town in the Czech Republic (320 metres above sea level, 173,000 inhabitants) lies in the middle of the Pilsen hilly country on the confluence of the rivers Mže, Úhlava, Úslava and Radbuza. The town was founded by Václav II in the year 1295 and soon it became an important town on the trade trails to Regensburg and Norimberg.

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century the town reached a big development. Historic Gothic centre remained preserved until the present and later it was declared a Town Historic Reserve.

The Hussite movement in Pilsen was very popular at the beginning. Priest Václav Koranda, senior worked in the town. He was trying to purify the church in the sense of the original Apostolic church. Later the Hussites however left for Tábor and Pilsen started to incline to Rome more and more. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century it was already a loyal Catholic town (only a Catholic could become a merchant of Pilsen).

The war years of the 17<sup>th</sup> century passed over, as well as the 18<sup>th</sup> century; the 19<sup>th</sup> century brought a rapid development and thanks to the newly established industry the new residents began to come to town. In the year 1842 the merchants' brewery was established and Pilsner Urquell (Plzeňský Prazdroj) as well as Škoda Works became famous all over.

Favourable development of the town was forcibly interrupted by the Munich Agreement and the Second World War. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of May 1945 Pilsen was liberated by the American army.

Nowadays, Pilsen is a modern town which can be proud of many historical monuments. The most valuable is a Gothic Cathedral of St. Bartholomew, founded in 1292, with a valuable statue of the Virgin and Child coming from the year 1390. The Calvary from the 1460<sup>s</sup> is also an admired woodcarving work. The pseudo-Gothic altar was made by Josef Mocker. The beauty of the interior is emphasized by big colourful, richly decorated windows. The tower of the cathedral is 102 metres high. Nowadays, this remarkable church is a cathedral church of the Roman Catholic bishopric which was established in 1991. In the main square there stands a Renaissance town hall from the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The Jewish synagogue, built in a Moorish-Romanesque style between the years

1888–1893, surprisingly survived the hard war years. Nowadays, there is a concert and exhibition hall here. In Pilsen we can also find the Orthodox Church of St. Anna as well as the houses of prayer of the Czechoslovak Hussite Church (CHC) and the Church of the Brethren.

The Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (ECCB) has two congregations in Pilsen. The older one is Hus – Western Congregation. First, let us mention little bit of a history: after the proclamation of the Toleration Patent in 1781 no Protestants were found in Pilsen. This region was influenced by the counter-Reformation very strongly. Only in the 60<sup>s</sup> of the 19<sup>th</sup> century some Czech Protestants came to Pilsen together with a wave of the new residents. At the beginning they used to meet in the German Lutheran congregation. In the year 1869 the first Protestant church in Pilsen was built (the building is now being used by the CHC). As late as in the year 1913 a Czech Reformed congregation was founded and later it became a part of the newly established ECCB (18<sup>th</sup> December 1918).

Although the congregation owned a congregation house with Hus' Chapel, they decided to build a church. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of July 1924 its foundation stone was laid. The building was designed by architect Bohuslav Chvojka. The church was built by Pilsen builder F. Vachta. It is a unique two-floor corner building in a Modernist style. In its front there is a tower over thirty metres high with a chalice which dominates the building. Exactly after one year, on the 6<sup>th</sup> of July 1925 Hus' Church at the corner of today's streets Němejcova and Borská was inaugurated. Besides its own house of prayer with 600 seats the church has other halls and rooms useful for the congregation life. There is a special system of lighting through the glass ceiling.

The first preacher, already since the year 1914, was a minister Ebenezer Otter who served the congregation for the whole 42 years and spent together with it the happy beginning, period of development after the 1<sup>st</sup> World War (when thanks to so called conversion movement the number of the Protestants was increasing) but also miserable war years; at that time he and his son George experienced the cruelty of a Nazi prison. The congregation as well remembers with gratitude other preachers who faithfully served in no less hard period of a totalitarian regime.



# DİLSEN – KÖRANDA CONGREGATION





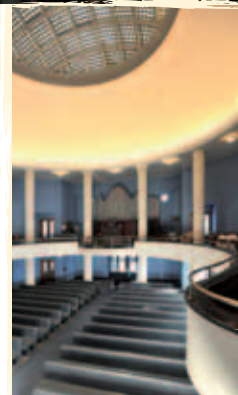
It is also good to mention that in the year 1932 there was the first Divine gathering in Bzí mountain near Blovice in the memory of the Hussite Manifesto which was declared in this place in the year 1419 by Václav Koranda. Parts of this manifesto became later a basis of the famous Four Articles of Prague.

History of the second Pilsen congregation (Koranda congregation) is inseparably connected with a name of a minister Karel Machotka (1881–1954) who influenced a development and life of the Evangelical church in the whole western Bohemia very strongly. In 1908 he came to Pilsen, to at that time a preaching station. The congregation was established in 1921 and from the very beginning they were thinking of a construction of a church. This important task was entrusted to architect Jaroslav Fišer and in the year of 1935 a foundation stone of not only a church but also a congregation house was laid. At the English embankment a five-floor house was built. Through its hall we can enter

a rotunda, a monumental circular space with twelve columns, a gallery and a glass dome. Over the pulpit there is a larger than life statue of the Resurrected Christ, a casting of a Danish sculptor Thorvaldsen's work. An organ is situated on the gallery opposite the pulpit.

The church was ceremonially opened on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November 1936. It is a remarkable work; there are as well several rooms and offices which are important for the work of the congregation. On the basement we find a columbarium which serves the public. In this period the residential houses which originally were supposed to serve the Protestant families were built.

Today's congregation is live and remembers its predecessors with respect.





# THE CENTRAL BOHEMIA REGION





It is a difficult task to describe the Central Bohemia Region as a whole. With its area of 11,050 square kilometres and population of nearly 1,200,000 inhabitants it is the biggest region of the Czech Republic. On the map it seems to circle Prague like a great wreath. In fact, its area covers the whole central Bohemia. The administrative seat of the Central Bohemia Region is in Prague which connects it closely with the capital. This region is very diverse as for the natural wealth, industrial production and historical sights.

We will try to describe briefly the history of the region and its landscape from the north to the south and vice versa so that it at least shortly mentions the most important and interesting things that can be found in this region and that is associated with the heritage of the Czech Reformation.

Let us set off and start our journey in the north where the river Vltava leaves Prague near the town of Mělník and flows into the Elbe (even though it is sometimes said to be the other way round). Further north our journey leads us to the colourful Kokořín Valley. The whole area including the castle belongs to the protected landscape area of Kokořínsko. We will also make a trip to Mladá Boleslav.

Heading westwards, we will visit the town of Kladno with its industrial area nearby. Slaný and Rakovník have their rich history and Kralupy nad Vltavou is an important industrial centre. Not far from Kladno we can find a village of Lidice which was completely burnt out and destroyed during World War II. Today it is a national cultural monument representing a symbol of reconciliation among people. The river Berounka flows through a romantic valley of a protected landscape area of Křivoklatsko with the Křivoklát Castle where king Charles IV lived between 1319 and 1323. Later the castle was used as a state prison where Jan Augusta, a bishop of the Unity of Brethren was kept between 1547 and 1563.

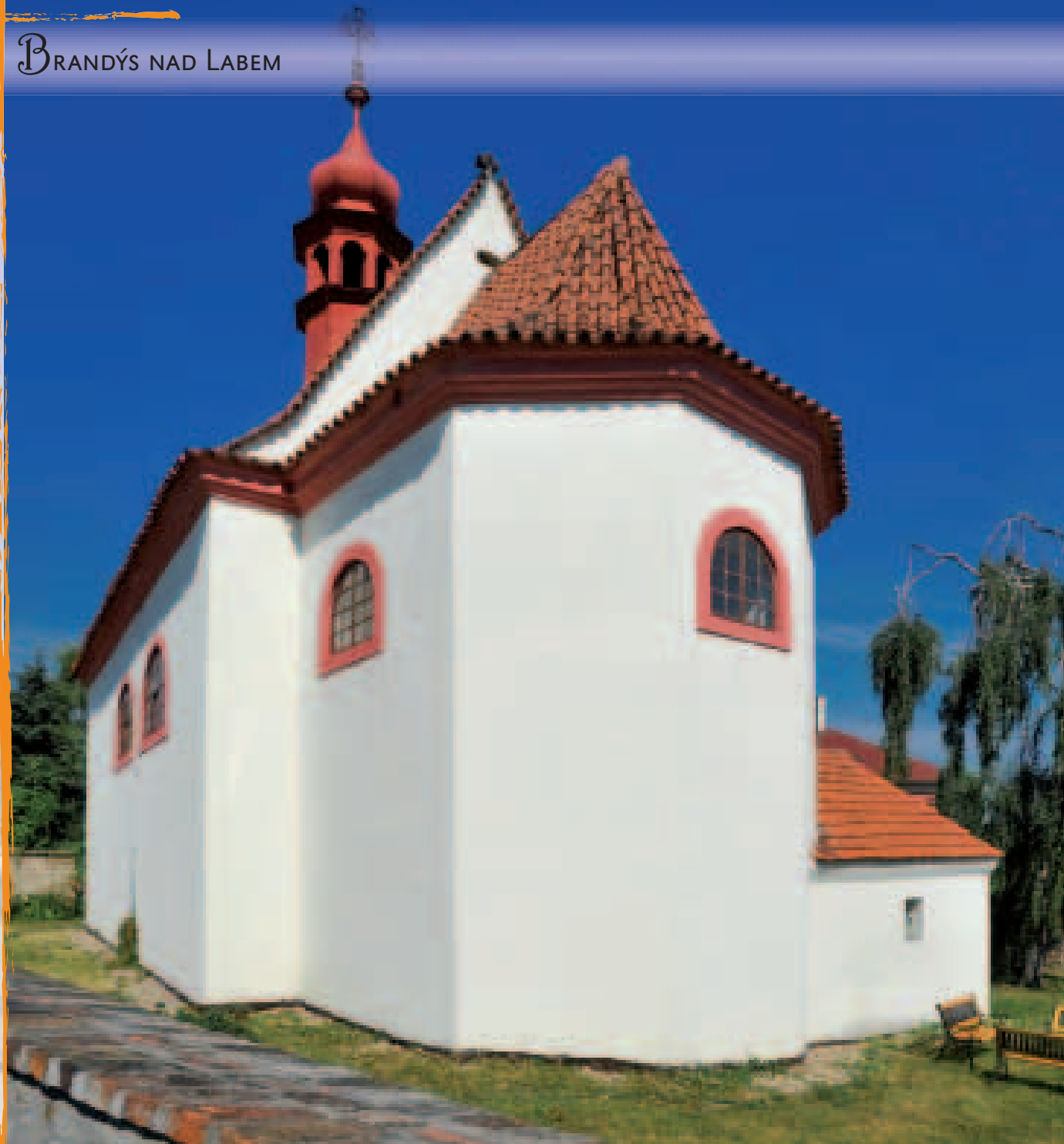
The southern part of the region has long been a popular tourist area. In the area of Slapy dam and in the valley of the rivers Berounka and Sázava there used to be tramper camps with their inimitable charm and atmosphere. Nowadays this area slowly becomes the suburbs of Prague. During your visits in the region you should not miss the following places: the town of Beroun with a protected landscape area of the Bohemian Karst (Český kras) nearby, Zbraslav, Karlštejn, Dobříš, Příbram with the Holy Mountain, Benešov and Vlašim. The Brdy Highlands (Brdská vrchovina) with the highest mountain of the region called Tok (865 m) is also a popular tourist place.

In the eastern part of the Central Bohemia Region we can find historically significant towns such as Čáslav, Kutná Hora, Český Brod and like beads on a string lying towns on the river Elbe-Kolín, Poděbrady, Nymburk and Lysá nad Labem.

The Protestant tradition has always been very strong in the Central Bohemia Region. Since it is impossible to introduce all congregations of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (ECCB), we will visit at least some of them.

BRANDÝS NAD LABEM • STARÁ BOLESLAV

BRANDÝS NAD LABEM





These two ancient towns on the river Elbe (lying at 169 metres above sea level, with about 15,000 inhabitants) merged in one municipality in 1960.

However, each of these towns has its own rich historical past and abundance of historical sights.

The history of Stará Boleslav stretches deep into the Czech past. The three-nave Romanesque basilica dates back to the 1030's. Before that, at the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> century there used to be a little Church of St. Cosmas and St. Damian at the same place. Czech prince Wenceslas is believed to be assassinated there on the 28th September 935 at the impulse of his own brother Boleslav. Prince Wenceslas was later canonized and became the patron saint of the Czech Lands. During the centuries, the Basilica of St. Wenceslas and the crypt were being rebuilt (the Baroque alterations were finished in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century) and now it is one of the most significant Catholic places of pilgrimage in our country.

On the main altar in the pilgrimage Church of Our Lady in Stará Boleslav, we can find the relief of Madonna, so-called palladium (which is supposed to protect Bohemia). This relief dates back to about the year 1500.

Brandýs nad Labem on the left bank of the Elbe originally used to be a market settlement. This little town originated in the 14<sup>th</sup> century by merging the village of Hrádek attached to the Church of St. Peter and the village attached to the Church of St. Lawrence. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century when this region was ruled by the family of Krajířs of Krajek, there was a very strong community of the Unity of Brethren. The Catholic Church of the Conversion of St. Paul originally belonged to them.

The old bridge stronghold was gradually rebuilt into a large Renaissance chateau. The steeple dates back to the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Thirty Years' War didn't stay away from Brandýs nad Labem; during the war the Renaissance chateau garden was completely ruined and the pernicious fire in the year 1828 destroyed the Jewish synagogue. But the Jewish cemetery from the year 1568, one of the oldest in Bohemia, has remained. It might be interesting to look at destinies of other town's churches: the Gothic Church of St. Lawrence with preserved frescos from the 14<sup>th</sup> century is used by the Czechoslovak Hussite Church (CHC), and originally Gothic Church of St.

Peter, rebuilt in a Baroque style, is used by the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (ECCB) Brandýs congregation.

In the year 1813 the chateau in Brandýs was a meeting place of the Emperor Francis I of Austria, king Frederick William III of Prussia and czar Alexander I of Russia where they were planning an attack strategy against Napoleon.

As the town developed, at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries the first Protestants came to both Brandýs nad Labem and Stará Boleslav. Due to the conversion movement (the possibility of conversion from Catholicism to non Catholic denominations), after the establishment of Czechoslovakia the number of the Protestants grew and in the year 1922 the Protestant community was designated as a preaching station (a quasi-congregation without a resident minister) and in 1930 an independent congregation of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren was established there.

In just a few months a church building was built which was inaugurated on the 14th December 1930 with a ceremonial service. There the Protestants survived the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War but not the normalization period of the communist regime. In the year 1978 both the church and the rectory had to make way for a housing estate so both buildings were pulled down. Although the congregation could use the Church of St. Peter at Hrádek for free (the church mentioned above, from the year 1304, originally Gothic, later rebuilt in a Baroque style, dissolved by Joseph II and almost pulled down), in the year 1980 they bought a villa on the edge of the town and rebuilt it into a congregation house and a rectory.

In the end, however, everything turned up unexpectedly. The Church of St. Peter at Vyšší Hrádek, a one-nave building with a pentagonal presbyterium and a small vestry, was later restored at a high cost. During the restoration not only Gothic tiles but also a tomb stone from the year 1622 were discovered in this ancient church which became a property of the congregation in the year 1999.

When the town rented them the site close to the church, and a new rectory including an apartment and rooms needed for the activities of the modern church grew up on the site, all the buildings created a beautiful complex attractively interweaving the charm of the ancient church with a modern congregation house.



CHURCH AND CONGREGATION HOUSE



ČÁSLAV



**S** In the foothill of the Iron Mountains (Železné hory), close to the town of Kutná Hora on the little stream with a picturesque Czech name Brslenka lies the ancient town of Čáslav (231 metres above sea level with over 10,000 inhabitants). It is close to the protected landscape area of the Iron Mountains and to the dam Seč on the river Chrudimka.

Around the year 1260 king Přemysl Otakar founded another of his royal towns – Čáslav on the route that connected Bohemia and Moravia.

The most significant historical sight of the town is the early Gothic congregation Church of St. Peter and St. Paul. Its construction started at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century on the site of the original Romanesque Church of St. Michael. It still can be found inside, it serves as a vestry. Also the Gothic fortification of the town has been partly preserved and so-called Otakar Tower near Brodská Gate was a part of it. The Baroque town hall with Žižka Hall dates back to the year 1766. On the square you can see the statue of Jan Žižka by J. V. Myslbek from the year 1881. The statue of M. Ulický by B. Kozák in front of the church commemorates the uprising in the year 1627. It was led by chaplain Matouš Ulický who was executed for leading the riot.

In the year 1420 the town was conquered by Jan Žižka and a year later so-called "Čáslav Assembly" took place in the Church of St. Peter and Paul. The assembly adopted the Hussite programme and formed a twenty-member government in which for the first time were also town representatives. Jan Žižka was elected too. During the following centuries the town was afflicted by wars and fires. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century Čáslav became a significant administrative centre and this development carried on in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Čáslav was the hometown of a well-known musician family of Dusíks and a birthplace of Jiří Mahen and Miloš Forman, the latter reminisced his hometown in his memoirs with love. Vladislav Vančura studied the local grammar school.

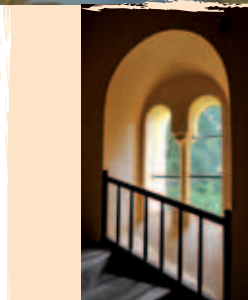
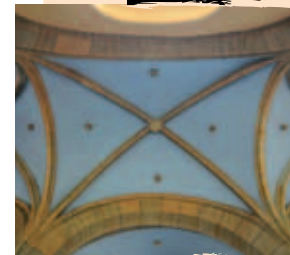
During the counter-Reformation the secret Protestants gathered in family homes in many surrounding villages. After the proclamation of

the Toleration Patent they espoused to the Helvetic confession and in the year 1783 the congregation was established. The first ministers came from Hungary. The believers gathered for worship in barns, usually in an original seat of the toleration congregation in Močovice, where an old granary was rebuilt into a house of prayer in the year 1785; later a rectory was added. The house of prayer was used for many years. In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the idea of moving the congregation to Čáslav and to build a church appeared. But only the pass of the Protestant Patent in the year 1861 which granted the equal rights for all churches speeded up the building permit. The foundation stone was laid in May 1864. In the year 1866 both the house of prayer and the rectory in Močovice burnt to ashes. This sad event was the decisive impuls for moving the congregation to Čáslav. F. Schmoranz senior from Chrudim, who was entrusted with the construction, designed a building in the Neo-Gothic style, a three-nave church with a steeple reminiscent of the steeple of St. Peter's and St. Paul's Church in Čáslav. The consecration of the church on the 6<sup>th</sup> July 1869 was a significant event for the whole Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren because it was the largest Protestant church that had been opened in Bohemia since the Toleration period. In the following years it was repaired several times at a rather high cost. In the year 1928 on the site of the old rectory, there was opened a new one with Komenský Hall and a flat for the minister. The church was festively reopened after the general reconstruction on the 21<sup>st</sup> June 2009, on the occasion of 225 years of the history of the congregation and 140 years from the construction of the church building.

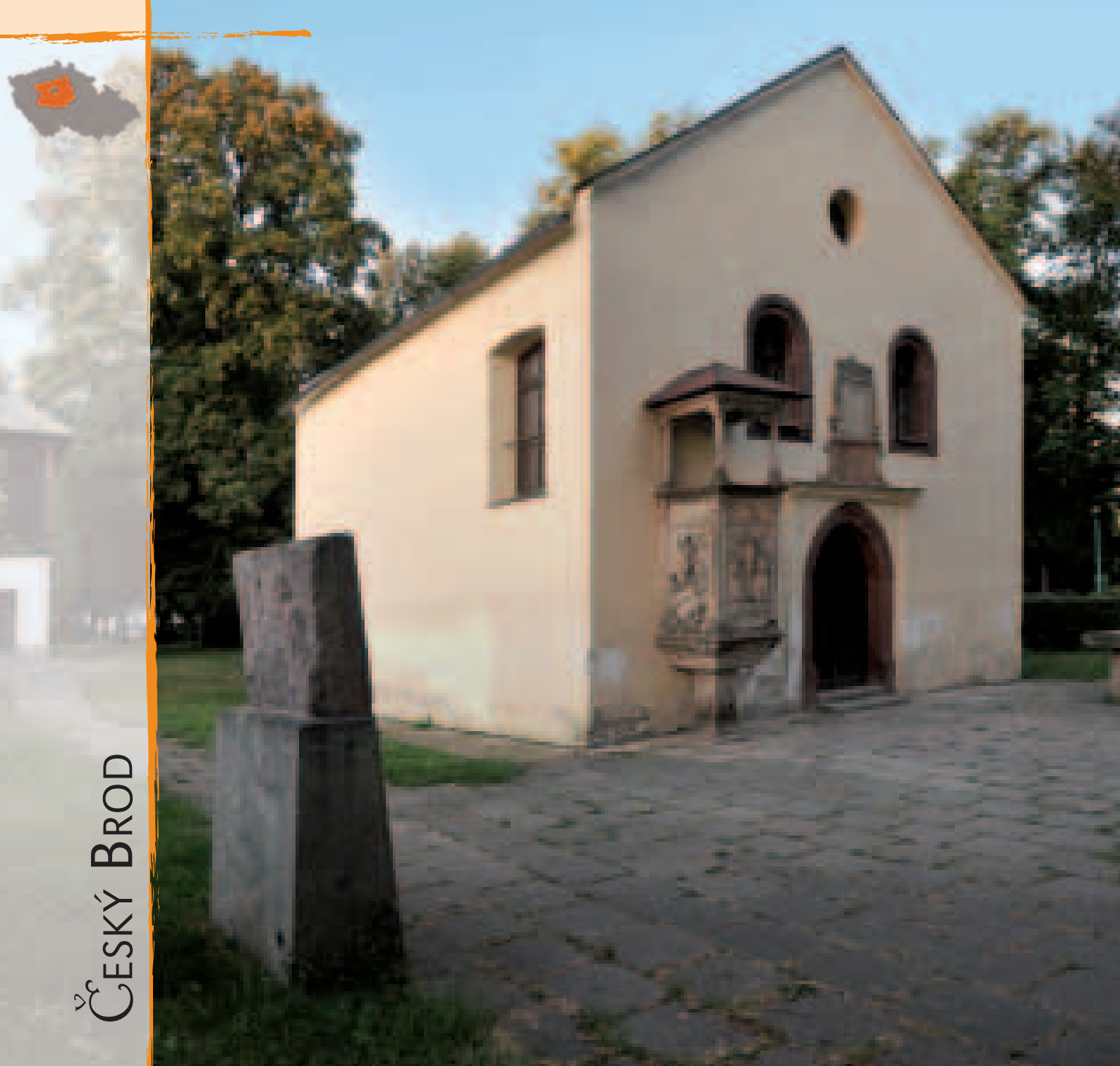
Let us also mention the year 1872 when the only Reformed teachers' college in Bohemia was opened in Čáslav. One of the teachers was Jan Karafiát.

The congregation in Čáslav has always pursued so much needed welfare activities. In the year 1889 they established charity Marta and an orphanage. Nowadays, the Diaconia of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren continues in these activities.

CHURCH AND RECTORY



# ČESKÝ BROD



**S** Český Brod Basin spreads in the east of Prague and derives its name from the town of Český Brod (219 metres above sea level with 6,637 inhabitants). The name means the Czech Ford as the town lies on the stream Šembera. It used to be an important place on so-called Trstenická path which had connected Prague with southern and eastern Europe. The town of Český Brod was founded as a market settlement above the ford across the Šembera by Prague bishop Jan I. In the year 1268 Jan III of Dražice, another Prague bishop made the local market settlement a town and it was called Biskupský Brod at the time. During the Hussite Wars the town supported the Hussites and in the year 1437 it was awarded the status of the royal town. In the year 1444 all the Hussite parties came to Český Brod to discuss a significant topic, observance of Compacts of Prague.

During the Thirty Years' War the town was badly damaged and almost depopulated for long years. A slow development started in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the introduction of the railway.

The memorial plaque on the local grammar school commemorates that it was the place where in May 1945 general Reumann signed the surrender of that part of the Nazi army called "Mitte".

The town's landmark is the Gothic congregation church of St. Gotthard which was later rebuilt in a Baroque style. The Renaissance belfry near the church dates back to the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. On the square of Arnošt of Pardubice there is the medieval town hall from the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, later rebuilt in a Renaissance and a Baroque styles and underneath it there is a system of old underground corridors. The remains of the town rampart from the 1350s have also been preserved. In the town we can visit the Podlipanské museum and we can see the statue of Prokop Holý by K. Opatrný from 1910. The historical town centre has been a Historic Town Reserve since 1993.

The former cemetery Church of the Holy Trinity has an interesting history regarding a development of a congregation of the Evangelical

Church of Czech Brethren in Český Brod. The Renaissance church from the year 1560 was originally Ultraquist and the outdoor pulpit from the period of Saxon Renaissance is a valuable and listed monument. After the Battle of the White Mountain in 1620 the church was reconsecrated as Catholic but it dilapidated and even its demolition was considered.

After passing the Toleration Patent in the year 1781 a congregation was established in nearby Kšely and it was attended also by the Protestants from Český Brod.

The preaching station in Český Brod was established in the year 1903 and then developed quickly. For a long time the members were striving to acquire the abandoned and dilapidated Church of the Holy Trinity with a nearby wooden belfry. They succeeded in the year 1951 after long negotiations. From a certain point of view in fact the Protestants returned "home". The first ceremonial service took place on the 24th May 1953. On 1<sup>st</sup> January 1969 the preaching station in Český Brod became a Protestant congregation. Then architect J. Poličanský and architect J. Trnka newly designed the interior of the church; the organ and the bell come from Kšely. The reconstructed church was opened on 12th June 1983 with an outdoor ceremonial service.

Between Český Brod and Kolín lies a little-known municipality Lipany which is a part of a village Vitice nowadays. It is, however, a place where the Czech history tragically changed: on 30th May 1434 the fratricidal battle between the Hussite radical troops and the troops of the Ultraquist nobility took place here and it is known as the Battle of Lipany. The Hussites and Prokop Holý were defeated.

In the year 1881 on a place of the battle there was erected the 10 metres high stone mound into which soil from the battle place at Zborov and from battle places in Italy was later put. Nowadays only few people wander there; but on 25th May 1991 there was held "the Day of the National Reconciliation". On one of the memorial plaques we can read: "You who have made a stop here, ponder where the discord leads the nation."



CHURCH AND RECTORY





KLADNO



**S** Industrial Kladno lies 25 kilometers northwest of Prague (381 metres above sea level), it is the largest town of the Central Bohemia Region (about 68,000 inhabitants) and the centre of Kladno-Rakovník coal basin. In the proximity of the town, however, we can also find a number of protected landscape areas, e.g. natural reserve Křivoklátsko or landscape park Džbán. Kožová hora (465 metres) with a 35-metre high watch-tower is a popular beauty-spot.

The place is first mentioned in the year 1318 within the context of the family of Kladenský of Kladno. In the year 1561 the settlement was declared a little town. At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Kladno was still a little-known town with a Gothic Church of the Virgin Mary's Assumption, a Renaissance chateau and a Baroque St. Florian Chapel by K. I. Dienzenhofer.

In the year 1840, deposits of black coal were discovered and it started a quick development of both the town and industry: in the year 1850 the first mine called Lucerna (the Lantern) and in the year 1889 the iron and steel works called Poldi were established. That originated the labour movement connected with the names of a communist politician Antonín Zápotocký and writer Marie Majerová.

During the years Kladno has not lost its industrial characteristics and remains a significant economic centre of the Central Bohemia Region with modern housing development and rich cultural background.

Not far from Kladno there is a place closely related to the history of Czechoslovakia: Lány. In the year 1592 Rudolph II had a Renaissance hunting-lodge built here, later it was converted into a chateau in the early Baroque style. After the rise of the Czechoslovak Republic the chateau was redeemed by state and was used as a summer residence of the presidents. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of September 1937 the first Czechoslo-

vak president T. G. Masaryk died there and he was buried at the local cemetery with his wife Charlotta, son Jan and daughter Alice. In the times of political submission their burial-place became almost a pilgrimage place.

Another famous place near Kladno is Lidice, the tragic symbol of the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. In revenge for the assassination of Reich Protector R. Heydrich, on the 10th of June 1942 the village of Lidice was razed to the ground, men were slaughtered, women and children taken to concentration camps and for re-education. The name of Lidice became a symbol of the resistance against the violence.

After the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War a monument was built up in new Lidice and there was established a rose garden with roses from all over the world. Many artists dedicated their works to Lidice. The most touching is a sculptural group of 82 children, victims of war, the lifelong work of sculptress Marie Uchytilová. Lidice is the national cultural monument and a memorial service takes place here every year.

The Protestant congregation of Czech Brethren in Kladno used to be, from the year 1872, a preaching station of Prague's Clement congregation. They became independent in the year 1912 and with the support of Clement and other congregations, they built a Neo-Classical church with historicist elements according to the project by architect J. Blecha from Prague. This church, which we can find in General Klapálek Street, was ceremonially opened with a service on the 10th of November 1895. After ten years the rectory was added and in the year 1911 the organ was installed on the newly built gallery. The congregation survived the war years in the shadow of the tragedy in Lidice and they could not avoid the death toll, either.

In the recent years, the church building which lately celebrated 110 years of its existence, has undergone large repairs.



Rolín





The town of Kolín (205 metres above sea level and almost 30,000 inhabitants) lies in the fertile Elbe lowlands.

Traces of the first ancient settlement witness how favourable such a location on the river Elbe was. The first written record dates back to the year 1261. King Přemysl Otakar II founded a town, which quickly developed and expanded due to lucrative agriculture and business. During the Hussite Wars Kolín was supporting the Hussites. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century a strong castle was built, the town, however, could not keep away from all the disasters of the Thirty Years' War which swept across all Bohemia. During the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), there was a battle between the Prussian and Austrian armies near the town.

The introduction of the railway after the year 1845 was of a great importance especially to the industrial development in Kolín. The town featured rich cultural and social life – let us mention just the popular band master František Kmoch; Kmochův Kolín, the festival of brass music bands, has survived till the present time. And only few people know that Kolín was a birthplace of Jakub Krčín of Jelčany, the builder of ponds in South Bohemia, poet J. S. Machar, literary scholar Otakar Fischer, painter Rudolf Kremlíčka and a number of other celebrities.

In Kolín there was a remarkable Jewish community. The Jewish cemetery from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Baroque synagogue and the memorial plaque for Jewish victims of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, all commemorate the history of Kolín's Jews.

Nowadays, Kolín is an important industrial town, nevertheless a lot of attention should be paid to remarkable historical sights. The complex of the Church of St. Bartholomew was proclaimed a national cultural monument. It was built in the early Gothic style shortly after the town was established in the year 1260. In the year 1349 it burnt down and in the years 1360–1400 was rebuilt according to the project by Peter Parléř. The three-nave church with two steeples is a rare example of combination of early and late Gothic. Inside there are six choir chapels and precious tombstones from the Gothic to Baroque times. Sculptor František

Bílek created Stations of the Cross for this church in the years 1910–1913. The bell tower dates back to the year 1504.

On the square we can see a Neo-Renaissance town hall with frescos by Adolf Liebscher and a number of valuable merchants' houses.

The congregation of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren in Kolín was established on the 16<sup>th</sup> of May 1868. At that time it was not easy to acquire a site for a church construction. Thanks to the devotion of some congregation members, the foundation stone was finally laid in May 1871 and already on the 17<sup>th</sup> of December 1871 there was the first service. In 1953 the church was rebuilt according to architect Bohumil Bareš's design. The latest alterations were carried out according to the project of artist Barbora Veselá.

The congregation in Kolín also owns an imposing congregation house called Hus House with Dušek Hall, which is used for congregation activities. Let us mention who was Čeněk Dušek, after whom the congregation hall is called.

Čeněk Dušek, the first minister of the congregation, still belongs to the remarkable personalities among the Czech Protestants. He deepened his theological knowledge with studies abroad; he was most fond of Scotland. Besides his service in church, he taught at the Kolín's grammar school not only religion but also English. And thanks to Čeněk Dušek, the grammar school enjoyed a good reputation and brought up a number of significant Protestant theologians. Moreover, we should mention e.g. Vilém Mathesius, the founder of the department of English and American Studies at Prague's Charles University and names such as Souček, Hrejsa, Boháč, who were Čeněk Dušek's grammar school students and later, in December 1918, had a big share of merit in forming the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren when the former Czech churches of the Reformed and Lutheran congregations in Bohemia and Moravia were united. The congregation members in Kolín look well after the church buildings and use them not only for the Sunday services but also for other various church and public activities.



CHURCH



RECTORY BUILDING



# ŘOVÁNEC





It is almost impossible to find Kovánec on the map. The village lies about 10 km westwards of Mladá Boleslav, 300 metres above sea level and there are only 125 inhabitants. The closest post office is in Skalsko. The first written report about the settlement is from the year 1546.

People in Kovánec and its surroundings supported the Hussites and they had knowledge of the Unity of Brethren. After the year 1620 counter-Reformation was as hard there as anywhere else, nevertheless, secret Protestants survived. They gave spiritual support to each other; moreover, they secretly managed to get and keep in touch with Czech exiles as far as from Zittau. After the declaration of the Toleration Patent in the year 1781 they espoused to the Augsburg confession and in the beginning they belonged to the congregation in far away Habřina.

In August 1785 the congregation finally went independent. The first services used to be in barns or in homes; but the desire for their own tabernacle was so strong that already in April 1786 there was a ceremonial service of laying the foundation stone and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September of the same year there was the first service in the new house of prayer. The simple oblong structure had a Baroque gable and the interior

according to the toleration guidelines. The original rectory was built in the year 1792 and simultaneously the Protestant cemetery was founded there.

In the year 1875 Kovánec congregation was afflicted by a disaster – the house of prayer was stricken by a lightning and it was not possible to retrieve it. The congregation, however, did not give up and decided to build a new church in a Neo-Romanesque style. In the front, a tetragonal tower was erected and happened to be consecrated sooner than the church, which was ceremonially opened on the 7th of September 1884. Inside there was a pulpit in the style of Second Rococo, created by carpenter M. Wittmayer. In the year 1869 a new rectory was built. Nearby there was a little barn for wood and hay, which used to be very important in the hard beginnings of toleration churches. Ministers often had to do some farming themselves so that they could earn their living. Such barns can still be found in some former toleration complexes.

In spite of the congregation's devotion, the church slowly delapidated so its demolition was considered. Nevertheless, in the year 2000 the decision was made to keep it and nowadays the church in Kovánec serves its spiritual purpose again.



# KUTNÁ HORA



**S** Considering the towns with rich history and precious architectural monuments, Kutná Hora ranks among the most significant ones in the Czech Republic. In 1995 the historical town centre was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Kutná Hora (254 metres above sea level, with over 21,000 inhabitants) grew on the river Vrchlice near the Cistercian monastery in Sedlec, which was mentioned in historical references already in 1142. The town developed as a result of exploring the silver mines, which was essential for royal power. During the reign of king Wenceslas II the original mining settlement, Mons Cuthna, grew rapidly.

In 1291 Kutná Hora had its own court of justice and mining office. In 1300 king Wenceslas II issued the new royal mining code. Shortly after that Kutná Hora also became the seat of the central mint of the Czech Lands, which incused for instance the so-called Prague Groschen. In order to help with the minting reform, Wenceslas II invited Italian experts who gave the name to a small royal palace from 1290<sup>s</sup> neighbouring with the new mint, the Italian Court (Vlašský Dvůr). During the reign of Wenceslas IV in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century it was rebuilt into a comfortable residence. In the past, the audience hall with precious compartment ceiling witnessed a lot of important meetings, which often influenced the history of the Czech Lands.

In 1409 it was the Decree of Kutná Hora which gave the members of the Bohemian university nation a decisive voice in the affairs of Charles University in Prague. Jan Hus took part in those meetings.

During the Hussite wars the town stood firmly behind Emperor Sigismund. The Hussites burned out the monastery in Sedlec as well as the town. Later Kutná Hora started to support Calixtines party.

In the Italian Court George of Poděbrady was elected hetman in 1444 and in 1471 an assembly meeting, which also took place in the Italian Court, elected Polish king Vladislav II Jagello the king of Bohemia. In March 1485 there were negotiations between Catholics and Utraquists and as a result a religious reconciliation was reached, which then ensured religious equality of both churches.

After the Battle of the White Mountain everything changed. On the 21 of June 1621 Jan Šultys of Felsdorf, Kutná Hora Mayor was executed in Prague Old Town Square together with 26 other Bohemian noblemen who had taken part in the Estates uprising. During counter-Reformation Jesuits came into the town. The Italian Court became the symbol of victorious Habsburg power. The mines became slowly desolate and in 1726 mining was stopped completely. The fame of Kutná Hora has never been restored, however, its historical monuments are the pride of the town even today.

Worth visiting is not only the national cultural monument of the Italian Court but also churches, historical buildings, the former Ursuline convent (by K. I. Diezenhofer), Gothic stone fountain and most of all the Cathedral of St. Barbara, the patron saint of miners, founded in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century (completed in 1905) and built by well-known architects, such as Jan Parlář (the son of the famous Petr Parlář), Matyáš Rejsek and Benedikt Rejt.

The Toleration Patent did not get vast public acceptance. After the declaration of the Protestant Patent (1861) the number of the Protestants in Kutná Hora started to grow. The congregation was founded in 1891 and the first minister Viktor Szalatnay served there for 48 years.

The church was built by J. Procházka and designed by Prague architect F. Buldra. His Empire style design is unique among sacred buildings of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (ECCB). The construction started in May 1887 and was completed in December of the same year. Clear, straight lines of the gables and the whole building evoke a Greek temple of a Doric style. Above the entrance portal there is a stone chalice, the symbol of Czech Reformation. A rectory was added to the church later.

In the 1970<sup>s</sup> the church interior was newly made up according to the design by the Radas. The compartment ceiling in various shades of blue, the Lord's table with a corrugated cross and windows as if looking at Rada's paintings on both sides of the pulpit, representing the Old and New Testaments. Eventhough the Kutná Hora Protestant church is not a historical monument to all intents and purposes, even after one hundred years it attracts attention with its unpretentious beauty.



# ŁYSÁ NAD LABEM







Lysá is one of the towns in the fertile Elbe valley with the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (ECCB) congregation. With its population of about 8,500 inhabitants, Lysá lies about 15 km to the east of Stará Boleslav at an altitude of 183 metres above sea level. During the reign of king Wenceslas II and his wife Guta, the former manor house was converted into a royal castle. In 1291 Lysá belonged to the queen of Bohemia.

Later it was owned by various noble families. During the years 1560 – 1564 a Renaissance chateau was built above the town. At the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century it was enlarged in a Baroque style by count F. A. Špork. The Baroque garden was decorated with statues by M. B. Braun. Near the chateau there is a building of a former Augustinian monastery. In Lysá we can find a lot of Baroque style buildings, such as the Baroque Town Hall from the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a congregation church with statues by J. Brokoff and M. B. Braun and the deanery building.

The modern development of the town started in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Today Lysá is an important railway junction with a busy exhibition centre.

Until the post-White-Mountain period, Lysá was mainly a Protestant town. A good example can be the Tržický family, who kept "The Evangelical Postil" (Postila evangelická, written in Czech in 1602) safe for 160 years. In 1625 there was an armed uprising against the forcible recatholization in this region. The Protestants were severely persecuted and in 1628 the uprising was repressed by the army. A lot of Protestants burnt their houses and went to live abroad then. Later, Czech exiles founded the town of Lissa, close to German Halle (Halle an der Saale).

The Toleration Patent, issued by Joseph II in 1781, brought new hopes to the secret Protestants who espoused to the Helvetic (Reformed) confession. In 1783 the first preacher from the Kingdom of Hungary arrived. At that time the

services took place in private places. After several attempts to regain the abolished congregation Church of St. Barbara, the congregation members started to build their own house of prayer. The foundation stone was laid in 1787 and the first service took place on the 20<sup>th</sup> of December 1789. There were no benches then and one had to stand during worship.

In 1807 there was a great fire in Lysá which damaged also the Protestant house of prayer. The building, however, kept its original toleration Neo-Classical style with pretty gables. On one of them a chalice has been placed. Inside the House there is the Lord's table from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century standing in front of a pulpit; an organ comes from 1829. Greater renovations were made in 1907 and in the 1950<sup>s</sup>.

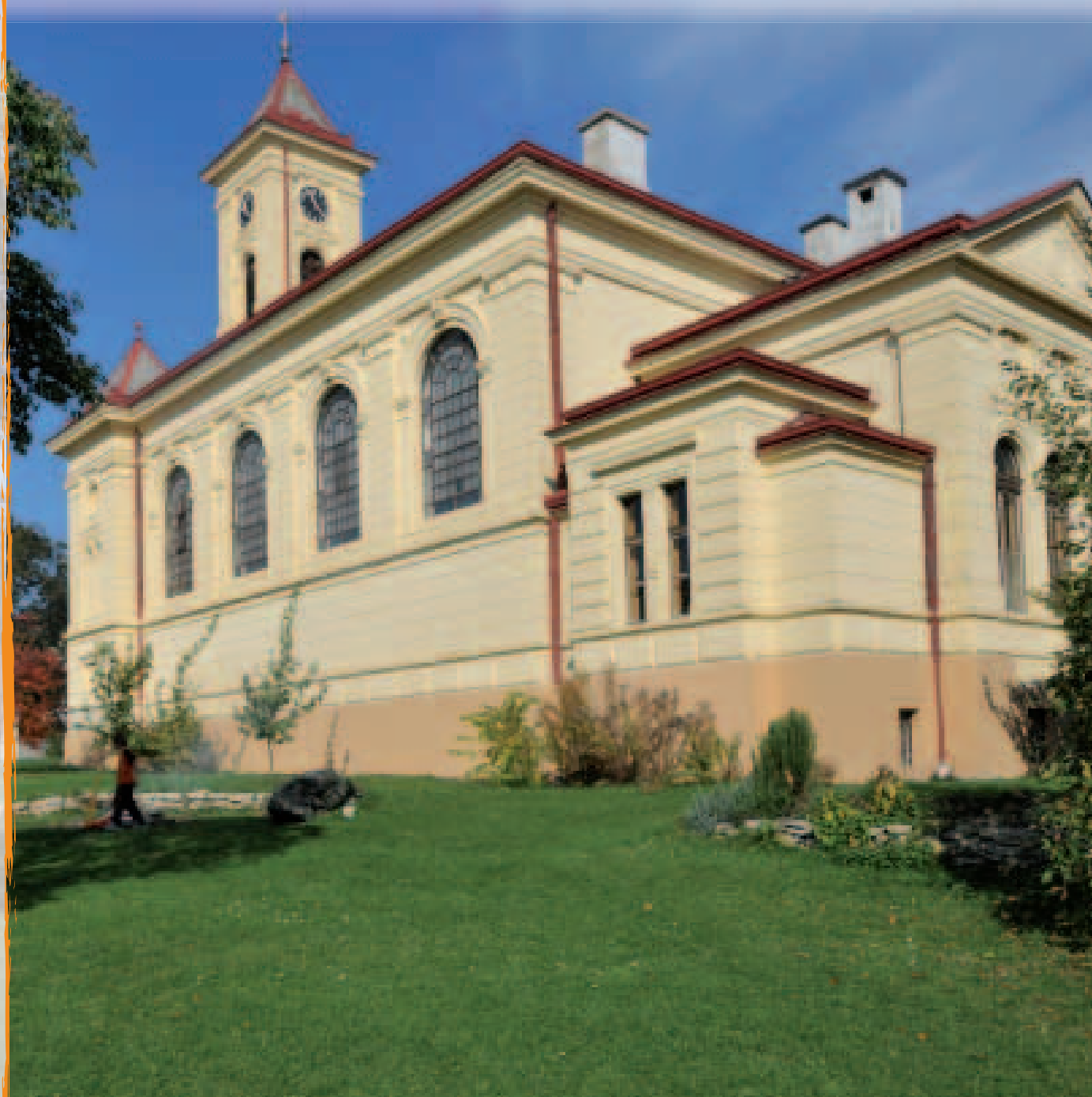
In 1864 the congregation bought a building neighbouring with the house of prayer (situated on today's Bedřich Hrozný Square), where they put a school and rectory. The school was later moved to a place on a hilllock between the house of prayer and the rectory. Today there is a congregation house which is also used as a winter house of prayer. The whole complex is replenished with tombstones from the original Protestant cemetery.

The most famous Lysá native Bedřich Hrozný, the son of a local preacher, Václav Hrozný, became a world famous orientalist. In 1915 he deciphered the ancient Hittite language. After nearly 3 thousand years the seemingly dead language spoke: "Now you shall eat bread, then you shall drink water", was the first translated sentence. Bedřich Hrozný was a university professor and later a rector of the Charles University in Prague. He was also awarded a honorary doctorate at many universities. His memorial can be found in the garden of the Lysá congregation complex. The congregation premises including the well maintained garden were added to the Town Reserve Zone on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2003 and declared a cultural monument in 2005.



# MĚLNÍK • VYSOKÁ U MĚLNÍKA

MĚLNÍK



**S** The town of Mělník (215 metres above sea level) with its nearly 20,000 inhabitants is situated to the north of Prague above the confluence of the rivers Elbe and Vltava. Already in the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries it was the seat of the Pšován tribe. Later, in the 13<sup>th</sup> century there was a growing market town, which was in 1274 declared a royal town by Přemysl Otakar II. The significance of the town grew even more under the rule of king Charles IV, who had ordered Burgundy grapevine to be brought here, which started a boom in vine-growing and brought fame to Mělník.

During the Hussite Wars the inhabitants of Mělník sided the Hussites and later supported George of Poděbrady. The consequences of the Estates uprising 1618-1620, the White Mountain Battle and the Thirty Years' War ended the promising development of this town. For years, Mělník was devastated by fires, battles and epidemics.

The town did not revive until the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the restoration of vine-growing (the first vine-growing school in Bohemia was founded here in 1885) and the development of railway traffic and shipping transport. The growth of the town was interrupted by World War II when Mělník was at the very border of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. The town was liberated in May 1945 with the help of local partisans.

New prospects for Mělník arose after the year 1989 and can be seen also in the care for the historical part of the town. The most significant monument is the Mělník Castle. From a wooden castle of the Pšovans it was later, during centuries, rebuilt subsequently in a Romanesque, Gothic and Renaissance styles and in the 17<sup>th</sup> century even Baroque items were added. From the castle terrace there is a beautiful view of the landscape and the confluence of the rivers Elbe and Vltava. After 1989 the Castle was returned to its original owners, the Lobkowitz family.

In the Castle premises we can find the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul. The three-nave Romanesque basilica was built in 1112 and in the 14<sup>th</sup> century it was rebuilt in the Gothic style. In 1555 it burnt out. Between 1911 and 1913 the church was reconstructed. Worth noticing is the late Gothic stone sanctuary which dates back to end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The main altar originated in 1750.

In the historical part of Mělník we can find many other interesting monuments, such as the

Prague Gate in the late Gothic style, old merchants' houses with wine cellars or the Town Hall from the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

During the counter-Reformation the secret Protestants kept mostly outside Mělník and started to come to the town in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A significant toleration congregation existed then in nearby Vysoká. The Mělník Protestants established its preaching station there and soon decided to build a church on a hillock close to the town centre. Its construction started in September 1896 and the consecration took place on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August 1897. In the place where king Charles IV originally planted the first Burgundy vine, today there is a large Neo-Classical church with a dominant rectangle clock tower, designed by František Červenka. Inside there are rich stucco decorations. The organ is situated on the gallery above the main entrance.

A congregation was established in 1901 and a rectory was built two years later. Mělník congregation members decided to build a congregation Hus House with two halls next to the rectory. The building was opened on the 24<sup>th</sup> of October 1937. Both halls are used for community purposes.

In Vysoká u Mělníka there is a Catholic Church of St Wenceslas built in 1757. Soon after the Toleration Patent in 1781 the former secret Protestants from Vysoká started to join the Reformed confession. The village was purely Protestant then. In 1783 a congregation was established there and in 1786 despite many hindrances also a house of prayer. It had to follow the toleration period regulations: it stood at the end of the village, without a tower or bells. It was built within a year – a simple building with a gabled roof with a chalice on its front – and consecrated on the 19<sup>th</sup> of November 1786. In 1882 a new rectory was built.

The house of prayer is preserved exceptionally well in its original condition. The cemetery nearby also dates back to the toleration times. In the former mortuary there is a permanent exhibition of the toleration houses of prayer in the area along the river Elbe, (including the one in Vysoká ) and it is administered by the Veritas society, historical society for updating the legacy of the Czech Reformation. Since the year 2000 Vysoká u Mělníka has been a preaching station of Mělník congregation.



MĚLNÍK



VYSOKÁ  
U MĚLNÍKA



# Mladá Boleslav





**S** Mladá Boleslav (234 metres above sea level, over 46 000 inhabitants) can be found about 50 km northeast of Prague on the confluence of the Jizera and Klenice rivers. It has beautiful environs of the protected landscape area of the Bohemian Paradise (Český ráj), the area around the Kokořín Castle and Mácha's Lake. Today Mladá Boleslav is renowned mainly for its car production. This town, however, has a rich history and a lot of monuments representing all major architectural styles.

In the first half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century Boleslav I, prince of Bohemia, founded a fort above the winding stream of the river Jizera which was turned into a royal castle in the middle of 13<sup>th</sup> century. Later it was owned by the noblemen of Michalovice. In 1334 a settlement below the castle became a vassal town which later joined the Hussite movement. In 1528 so-called New Town was added to the original Old Town. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century an important role in town history was played by the Unity of Brethren, supported by the house of Krajčů of Krajek. There was an episcopal seat, a school, printing house and the town soon became a center of culture. Rudolph II awarded Mladá Boleslav the status of a royal town. Its successful development, however, was interrupted by the Thirty Years' War and affected by vast fires.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the town was revived also thanks to Václav Laurin and Václav Klement who started their bicycle production in 1895. In 1905 the first car was manufactured there, which meant the foundation of Mladá Boleslav car factory. Today Škoda cars are well-known all over the world. In 1991 the company became an important part of the Volkswagen Group.

Let us mention a few significant monuments. In the past, the castle of Mladá Boleslav was several times rebuilt, during the Thirty Years' War demolished and from the times of Joseph II until 1938 it served as army barracks. Today it is a seat of a museum and town archives. The late Gothic Town Palace Templ dating back to the late 15<sup>th</sup> century is an excellent example of Vladislav Jagellon Gothic style. Today it is used as an exhibition hall. The Renaissance building of the Old Town Hall with rich graffiti decorations and two towers was designed by the Italian architect Matteo Borgorelli. He was also the author of the Renaissance three-nave building

of the Unity of Brethren built between the years 1544–1554. This impressive building with valuable frescos only accentuates the significance of the Unity of Brethren at that time. It is the oldest Renaissance pseudo-Basilica outside Italy. In 1623 it was recatholicized and later used as a storage building. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century it seated a regional museum and today it is used as an exhibition and concert hall and a gallery. During recent excavations an invaluable archive of the Unity of Brethren was discovered there. The early 15<sup>th</sup> century Roman Catholic Gothic Church of the Assumption of Virgin Mary was later rebuilt in a Baroque style.

The Municipal Theatre, built between 1906 and 1909 by the Czech and Vienna architects as well as a sculptor Jan Štursa, is an example of clear Art Nouveau style. Several buildings by the well-known architect and representative of the Czech Constructivism Jiří Kroha, who worked in Mladá Boleslav between 1923 and 1927, are also worth seeing as well as the Jewish cemetery with gravestone of Jacob Bassevi von Treuenberg (Jakub Baševi), the financier of Albrecht of Wallenstein.

In Mladá Boleslav we can find apart from the Roman Catholic congregation also a congregation of the Brethren Church, the Czechoslovak Hussite Church and the Unity of Brethren. Historically, the local Protestants joined the preaching station of the Reformed congregation in Mělnické Vtelno since 1897. A congregation of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (ECCB) was established in Mladá Boleslav in 1920 and three years later the Church bought a building in Husova Street, the ground floor of which was turned into a house of prayer with rooms for congregation activities. Due to the benevolence of the town authorities the Protestants could join the Brethren community for church services.

In 1993 they were granted a free lease of St. Havel's Church, an originally late Gothic cemetery church which was later rebuilt in a Baroque style and a tower was added in 1735. In the cemetery around there are valuable grave-stones. Renaissance and Baroque tombstones can be found also inside the church; such as the one of Jan Augusta, a bishop of the Unity of Brethren. Church services take place here in the summer months.



GOthic CEMETERY CHURCH OF ST. HAVEL



CONGREGATION HOUSE



ŠERATOVICE – LIBIŠ



**S** Libiš (165 metres above sea level, population nearly 2,000 inhabitants) has been an independent village since 1990. Originally it used to be a part of the nearby town of Neratovice. The Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (ECCB) congregation has since kept its name Neratovice-Libiš.

A small rural settlement which was mentioned in historical references already in 1323 was founded to the north of Prague on a trade route leading from Prague to Mělník and further north to Zittau (today in Germany), in the place of the century old so-called Stephen's ferry crossing over the river Elbe. At the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, a one-nave Gothic Church of St. James the Greater (sv. Jakub většší) with invaluable fresco paintings from the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries was erected there. The original ferry crossing was replaced with a bridge across the Elbe in 1912.

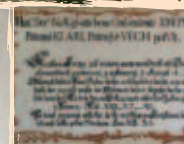
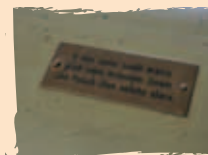
The greatest development of Libiš started during the First Czechoslovak Republic. At the end of World War II a part of the village was destroyed in an air-raid by the Allied Airforce. Libiš was a birthplace of the famous historian V. V. Štech.

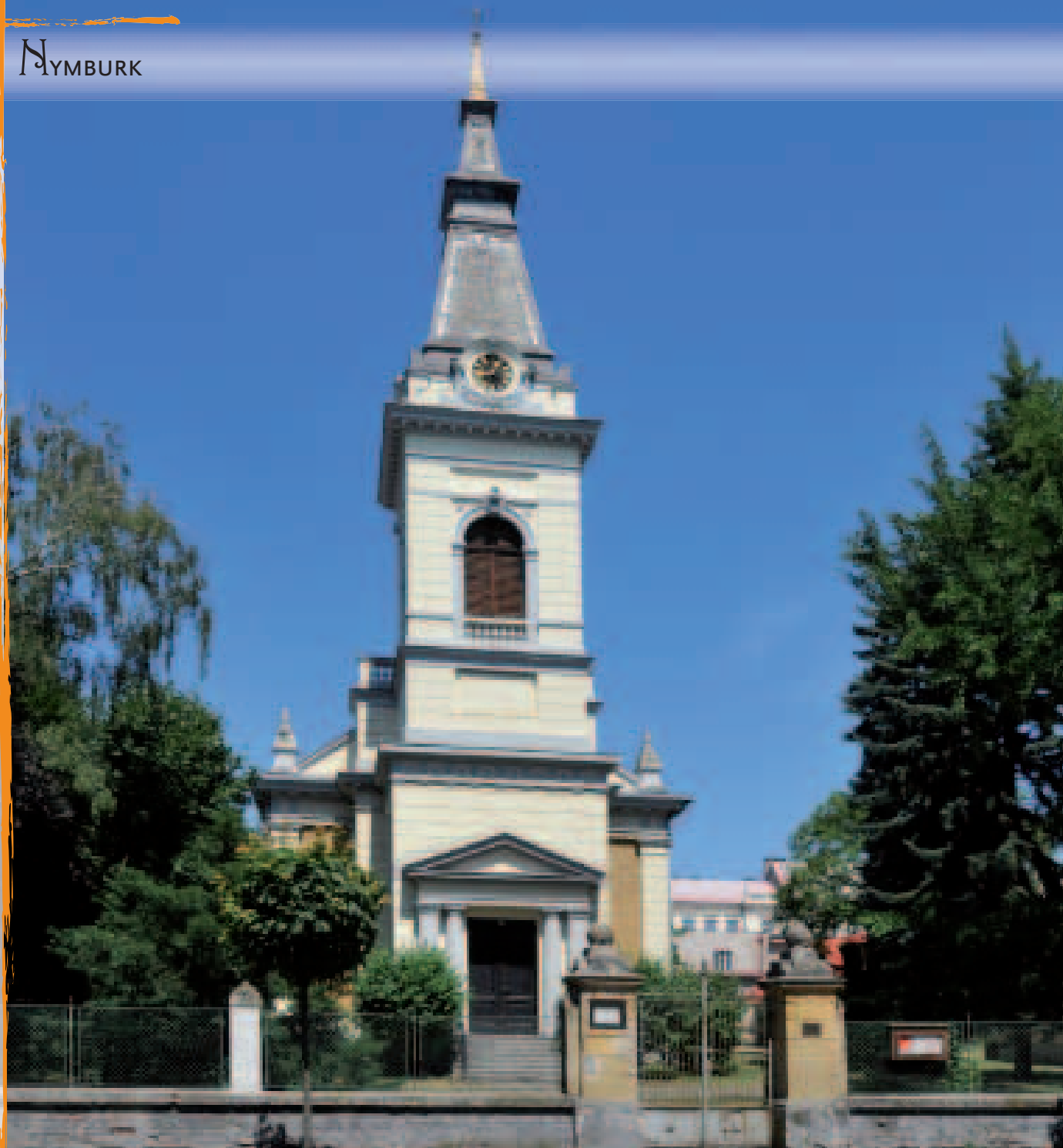
Like in many other villages along the river Elbe the secret Protestants remained also in Libiš during the whole counter-Reformation period. After the proclamation of the Toleration Patent in 1781 by Holy Roman Emperor, Joseph II of Austria, they chose the Augsburg confes-

sion and later joined the Reformed Church as they found the former one similar to the Roman Church. That was the reason why they experienced many spurns from their authorities. The first service of the newly established congregation took place in a barn on 20<sup>th</sup> July 1783 when a Hungarian preacher Jan Végh, one of the most significant toleration preachers, had his first sermon in Libiš. As the authorities did not want to allow the construction of a new house of prayer, Jan Végh requested a personal audience with Emperor Joseph II who granted him the permission. The house of prayer in the rural Baroque style was consecrated on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1792. In its simplicity it is a very impressive building which has survived various attempts of the later church members to add a tower, rebuild it or even tear it down. The house of prayer has remained intact with its original distinct interior, including carved benches and colourful decorations. A new organ was added in 1958.

One of the congregation members in Libiš was also Jan Palach. A small tablet commemorates the seat where he sat only a few days before his death. The funeral worship was served by Libiš minister ThDr. Jakub Trojan.

The rectory building, erected in 1888, was reconstructed in the 1950<sup>s</sup>. The newly built congregation hall and other rooms are used for various church activities.







With its nearly 15,000 inhabitants, the town of Nymburk lies northeast of Prague on the river Elbe (186 metres above sea level). It is an important railway junction and an industrial centre.

Originally, in the site of a primeval settlement where the old provincial route crossed the river Elbe there used to be a Slavonic settlement. Around the year 1257 king Přemysl Otakar II founded there one of his royal towns and had it embattled with double walls. Among the most valuable monuments is a Gothic Cathedral of St. Giles, the only tower of which is out of its axis. The Renaissance town hall dates back to 1526 and the former water tower called "Turkish tower" comes from 1597. The historical part including the fortification walls which were partly destroyed but at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century also partly reconstructed has become a Historic Town Reserve.

The Hussite wars did not affect the town at all. The townsmen accepted the Four Articles of Prague and until 1620 the town remained Protestant. After the Battle of the White Mountain with the onset of counter-Reformation Nymburk went through the same ordeal as many Czech and Moravian Protestant towns. The Thirty Years' War, fires and epidemics nearly destroyed it.

The introduction of railway traffic in 1870 was a great turning point for Nymburk. It started to develop and today it is a nice town proud of its past and its famous natives, such as B. M. Černohorský, a composer, and Bohumil Hrabal, a famous writer who lived during his childhood in the local brewery.

After the Toleration Patent in 1781, only two families in Nymburk joined the Evangelical church. In the country the situation for the Reformed church was more favourable. Due to the town development the Protestants started to come to Nymburk as well. The congregation was established on 8th November 1897. Not much later the plans to build its own church arose. The foundation stone was laid in Smetanova Street already on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1898. Less than a year later a Neo-Renaissance church, designed by G. Alber, an architect from Brno, with a 35 m high tower was built by J. Blecha, a Prague master builder.

Alongside with its construction, the rectory was built and the area around turned into a park.

The consecration of the church took place on 30th November 1898. Today it is well-kept; in the sacral area there is a Neo-Renaissance pulpit; the organ is original, repaired in the 1950<sup>s</sup>. The whole complex – the church, rectory as well as the congregation room built later – is surrounded by a park.

The formerly independent congregation in the village of Hořátev became a preaching station of Nymburk congregation only in 2000. The first written records about the village date back to 1384. Hořátev originally belonged to the noblemen of Kunštát and Poděbrady who were devoted Utraquists. As a consequence, secret Protestants stayed in this area despite the Jesuit re-Catholicization attempts. Soon after the Toleration Patent, a new Reformed church congregation was established here in 1783. The first services took place in a barn, which was quite common then. It did not take long and a new house of prayer according to the toleration regulations was built. It was consecrated on 30<sup>th</sup> September 1792. It is especially valued as it has remained, apart from minor adjustments, unchanged up to now. Also the interior is in accordance with the spirit of a toleration house of prayer. It is touching by its simplicity and worship. The linden tree which was planted near the house of prayer about 200 years ago is today among Czech listed trees. In winter, services take place in a pretty Art Nouveau rectory building.

In a nearby spa town of Poděbrady there is also the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (ECCB) congregation which was not established until 1895, however, its rich history dates back to the Hussite times. Boček of Kunštát, the owner of Poděbrady then, was a devoted advocate and supporter of Master Jan Hus and his seal can be found on a protest letter of Bohemian noblemen sent to the Council of Constance after Jan Hus' execution.

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century Poděbrady was awarded the status of a town. Today you can find here a great number of interesting historical monuments as well as relaxation in the quiet spa part of the town. Worth your interest might be the Protestant house of prayer which has undergone a series of noticeable renovations. The members of the congregation are hospitable and used to the visits of spa guests.



CONGREGATION HOUSE

PEČKY





**S** It is the youngest town of the district of Kolín. A village of Pečky was declared a town in 1925. Its past was connected neither with royalty nor with aristocracy. In 1225 it was mentioned in records as a tiny rural settlement. Agriculture, namely production of wheat and sugar cane, prospered in this area ever since due to its convenient location in a fertile Nymburk Basin near Poděbrady. Only much later, in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the village started to grow with the development of a railway traffic when the track Prague – Kolín – Česká Třebová was built. At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century a new school and a town hall were built and sugar cane processing and production of agriculture machinery were introduced. Today Pečky which lies at an altitude of 200 metres above sea level has about 4,300 inhabitants.

The year 1989 meant a new positive impulse for the town and today Pečky is a nice little town with new building development as well as two interesting historical monuments: the Catholic Neo-Romanesque Church of St. Wenceslas with a beam structure and interesting Art Nouveau decorations built in 1913; the other one is the Evangelical Church of Master Jan Hus.

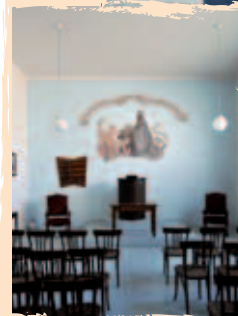
Before visiting this outstanding building of European significance, we need to mention the history of the local Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (ECCB) congregation which is closely connected with the history of the nearby Velim congregation. The secret Protestants from Velim and its environs espoused to the Reformed confession already in 1783 and a year later the first toleration house of prayer was built. In 1854 it was replaced by a monumental three-nave Neo-Renaissance church with a tower. A rectory was added later. In 1907 a preaching

station of Velim congregation was established in Pečky and based on the idea of Velim minister Jaroslav Řepa a possibility of building a new church in Pečky started to be considered. The church was to be devoted to Master Jan Hus and its construction started on 16<sup>th</sup> May 1914. The courageous plan to complete the building in 1915, on the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the execution of Jan Hus at the stake was however interrupted by World War I. Despite that the first service took place in the new Protestant church already on the 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1916. The inauguration of the new church on 16<sup>th</sup> May 1918 was not only a religious event but it was also equally important for general public as architect Oldřich Liska with his colleagues designed a building that has no equivalent in religious architecture in Bohemia or perhaps even in Europe.

The whole complex of buildings is a unique example of early Cubism. The church is connected with a rectangular tower, with a chalice at the top, with a rectory and community rooms. Also the interior of the communion area and a neighbouring Jerome Hall, in memory of Master Jerome of Prague (Jeroným Pražský) is in its very detail in a Cubist style. The Lord's table, benches, the organ, stained glass windows as well as beautiful chandeliers are in agreement with the author's vision and with an excellent craftsmanship finish.

Worth noticing is a plaster model of Master Jan Hus statue made by Stanislav Sucharda in 1912. It can be found on a neatly kept place in front of the church.

The Protestant church in Pečky, even though not very well-known, is one of the architectural treasures and definitely worth visiting.



# ŠOBĚHRDY





**S** The municipality of Soběhrdy with less than 400 inhabitants lies northeast of Benešov at an altitude of 409 metres above sea level. The first record dating back to 1360 mentions a fortress belonging to a family of Čeněk Velík from Soběhrdy. It was however destroyed long time ago.

Ever since the Hussite times the history of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (ECCB) congregation in Soběhrdy has been connected with the town of Benešov and its Reformation past. Benešov was a Hussite town uninterruptedly from 1424 to 1624. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century there was also the Unity of Brethren congregation. A similar situation applied to Soběhrdy and its surroundings. The Protestant tradition was very strong there. It even outlived the difficult times after the Battle of the White Mountain when Czech Brethren preachers were expelled; the Protestants used to meet secretly in the gorges under the Kačí Hill.

Soon after the Toleration Patent in 1781 several families espoused to Helvetican confession. A congregation was founded with the arrival of the first Hungarian minister S. Galambosy. In May 1786 a construction of a house of prayer started and the first service took place a year later on the 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1787. A school was

built already in 1785 but the rectory was not in service until 1815.

Since the original house of prayer was delapidated, a new stone Neo-Classicist one was built in 1832. It was later repaired and rebuilt in 1909 by M. Blecha. A new apse was added and later also a Biedermeier style rectangle tower designed by a famous architect E. Králíček was erected. A covered staircase was also added to the growing building. In 1910 three bells were put into the tower. Today the church is painted white inside and in the apse there is a pulpit with the Lord's table in front.

After the foundation of the ECCB in 1918 the Soběhrdy congregation grew enormously due to a conversion movement and was one of the biggest in the Church at that time. A former preaching station in Benešov became an independent congregation in 1925. Its members devote their time to congregation activities and conscientiously care for the church as well as the other buildings.

Even today the Soběhrdy congregation district is quite large. Its members attend community activities and maintain the church as well as the other buildings.

