Participant: Amanda Kvelde

Sending Institution: Luther Academy

Host Country: Slovakia

Host Institution: Matej Bel University, Faculty of Education, Department of Theology and Christian Education, Banská Bystrica.

Mobility Duration: 19. - 23.10.2026.

Motivation to participate in Erasmus study mobility

I participated in this Erasmus+ Blended Intensive Program (BIP) to deepen knowledge in biblical studies and theology, as well as gain international academic experience.

Cooperation with the sending and receiving institutions

My experience of cooperation with both institutions was excellent. Luther Academy provided great support throughout the preparation process, helping with all the necessary agreements, documentation, and administrative arrangements.

Matej Bel University welcomed us with genuine warmth and hospitality. Throughout the entire week, I could feel their kindness, care, and willingness to help. It was clear that the organizers had put a lot of effort and heart into making our stay a positive experience.

As this was their first time organizing an Erasmus+ BIP, there were naturally a few moments when things did not go exactly as planned. However, this was completely understandable and did not negatively affect my overall experience. On the contrary, I especially appreciated their dedication, flexibility, and sincere desire to make everyone feel welcome.

Academic and personal achievements

One of the most interesting concepts I encountered was "social imaginary", a term I had never heard before, but which immediately caught my attention. I found it fascinating how our understanding of the world is shaped not only by what we consciously believe, but also by the images, stories, environments, and everyday practices that surround us. The lecturer illustrated this with a comparison between a shopping mall and a church. Both spaces shape our desires and values, but in different directions. A shopping mall encourages us to seek happiness and fulfilment through consumption, while a church, through worship, prayer, and community, directs our attention towards God. I found this example particularly relevant because it explained a rather complex concept in a simple and relatable way.

Another thought-provoking idea was understanding creation as a temple. This perspective helped me see the creation narrative in Genesis from a different angle, recognizing that the created world is not merely a physical environment, but a meaningful space designed for humanity to live in relationship with God.

I also particularly enjoyed the exercise in which we had to identify repeated verbs and verbal structures in the Genesis creation narrative. It was an excellent way to explore both God's creative activity and the literary intentions of the human author. The exercise helped me recognize how carefully the biblical narrative is structured and how the author's use of language and repetition draws our attention to the deeper meaning of the text.

The group discussions about artificial intelligence (AI) and Generation Z were also valuable. They gave me an opportunity to exchange ideas with participants from different countries, hear about their experiences, and discover how cultural and social contexts influence our perspectives on these topics.

Most memorable impressions

One of the most memorable was the exercise in which we explored the biblical text almost as if we were solving a mathematical puzzle. I found it fascinating to discover how biblical interpretation can involve not only theology but also elements of mathematics and literary analysis. By looking for similarities, differences, repetitions, and patterns, we were able to see the familiar creation narrative from a completely new perspective. It reminded me how much depth can be found in Scripture when we learn to approach it with curiosity and attention to detail.

Another very meaningful moment was the opening of the program with worship songs. I was deeply touched by the experience of people from different countries, cultures, and backgrounds coming together to worship God. Although we spoke different languages, at that moment it felt as if we all shared the same language of the heart. It was a beautiful reminder of how faith can unite people beyond national and cultural boundaries.

And, of course, I will always remember the beauty of Slovakia. The breathtaking mountain landscapes, the peaceful atmosphere, and the charming historical town of Banská Bystrica, with its narrow streets and beautiful architecture, made this experience even more special.

Practical advice for future Erasmus+ participants

Don't be afraid to participate in discussions, ask questions, or share your thoughts, even if English is not your first language. You don't need to understand every academic term or have the perfect answer. Sometimes the most valuable learning happens when we challenge ourselves and explore unfamiliar ideas together.

From a practical perspective, I recommend reviewing the program in advance, preparing for the topics where possible, and allowing some extra time to explore the host country and its culture.

Be curious, be open, and don't be afraid to step beyond what is familiar.

Additional reflections

Looking back on this Erasmus+ experience, I realize that one of its greatest values was the opportunity to see theology from a broader perspective. This week reminded me that theology is not only about academic knowledge, biblical interpretation, or understanding complex concepts. It is also about how these ideas shape our understanding of the world, our relationships, and the way we live our everyday lives.

One of the thoughts I will take with me is how important it is to make theology understandable and relevant to people today, especially younger generations. We live in a rapidly changing world, and I believe that the Church needs to find

meaningful ways to communicate timeless biblical truths in a language that people today can understand and relate to.

I am sincerely grateful for the opportunity to participate in this program. It was a week that challenged my thinking, broadened my perspective, and inspired me to continue growing both academically and personally.