

# ANABAPTIST INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES

Pointing people to Christ

Fall 2016 | Issue 68

## *In this Issue*

- Looking Toward the Future
- Hope Singers Tour
- Reflections by Lolita
- Financial Update

What is AIM? What is its long-term goal? In the editorial of this edition, Matthew Mast answers these questions and provides an overview of the work ahead. Enjoy a staff wife's reflections on her fifteen years in Poland and a glimpse into the Hope Singers' tour this summer.

## LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

*by Matthew Mast, Board Chairman*

July 12, 2016 marked fifteen years since AIM established a long-term team presence in Poland. These fifteen years have been filled with God's presence and provision in many ways. From a purely human perspective, the existence today of the AIM team in Poland is miraculous: the financial and personnel resources that could have been guaranteed by the board of directors were far too scant to provide for the needs of the team. We have seen God's hand at work to provide funds and personnel at the right times. We thank Him!

As we consider what God has done, we also look to the future. The board, along with staff in Poland, has spent the last year considering the future. In dependence on God, we are working toward what we believe will honor Him and build His kingdom. In this article, we consider two questions: What is? What are we working toward?

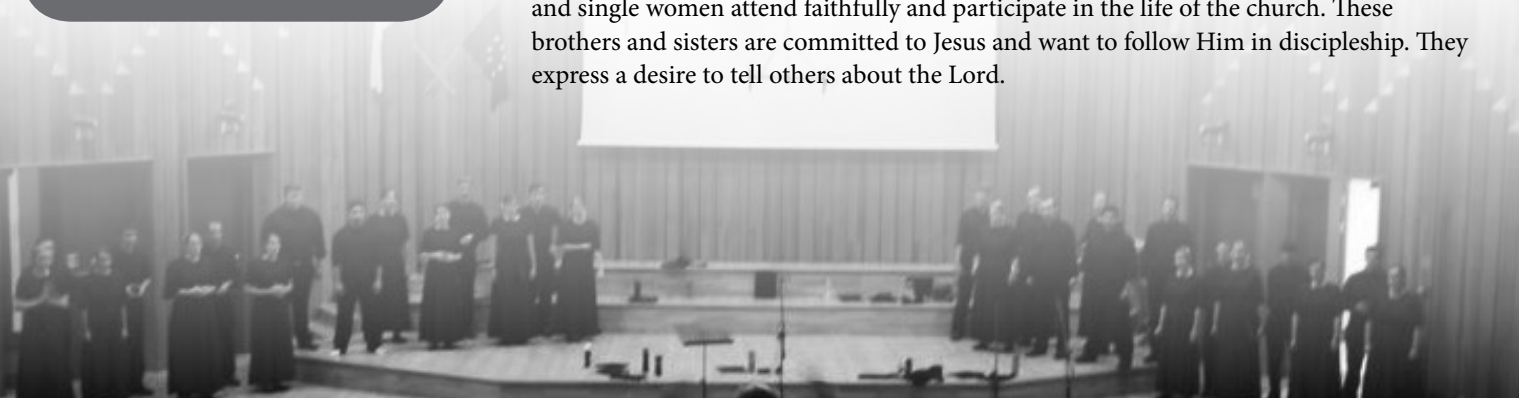
### WHAT IS?

Gateway to English provides English instruction to a wide spectrum of students. During the 2014-2015 school year, 70% of our students were children and youth through high school and 26% were professionals or laborers. We even teach retirees! In September 2015-May 2016, 150 students were enrolled in either group or individual English lessons. According to a Polish brother, the opinion about the school in the community is good. The avenue of teaching English opens doors for interaction with people from all walks and stages of life.

Each month, 4,200 copies of Seed of Truth are printed and distributed throughout Poland. The magazine has extended the reach of AIM's influence in Poland and has brought our team into contact with believers throughout Poland.

In August, the Hope Singers completed their seventh biannual singing tour of Poland. This ministry in song encourages Polish believers and builds connections with evangelical churches around Poland.

Agape Mennonite Fellowship gathers as a congregation of believers. Several families and single women attend faithfully and participate in the life of the church. These brothers and sisters are committed to Jesus and want to follow Him in discipleship. They express a desire to tell others about the Lord.



Working with U.S. and Polish currency and with banks in two countries has made it difficult to structure our accounting systems for accuracy and transparency. Through much hard work over the past few years, we now have systems and procedures in place that improve accuracy and accountability. We are grateful to report greater financial integrity than ever before.

This year is a time of personnel transitions. Three of the four English teachers completed their terms of service, so three new teachers have moved to Poland. After serving in Poland since April 2014, Jonathan and Heather Miller and their family have returned to the United States. Their contribution was significant, and they will be missed. This leaves Lavern and Lolita Hershberger and their family as the only American family on the AIM team. We anticipate having Shannon and JoElla Lehman and their family join the AIM team by early November for a two-year term.

### **WHAT ARE WE WORKING TOWARD?**

AIM began with a vision to plant indigenous Anabaptist churches in Poland. It quickly became apparent that teaching English offered both an avenue for ministry and a basis for long-term residence in Poland. We also felt that distribution of Seed of Truth would fill a need for solid biblical teaching in Poland and increase awareness of the presence of an Anabaptist congregation. While these endeavors require administration, funds, and personnel, they have never replaced the vision for church planting.

In the last year, the board has worked to clarify vision for the next five years. These discussions have included team members and the local congregation in Poland. The board and team affirm the goal of establishing an indigenous congregation in Poland. This overarching vision anchors our planning.

The brothers and sisters of the Agape Mennonite Fellowship are learning to work together as a body, bringing their different backgrounds and gifts to the group. They understand the need for Poles to take a more active role in the life of the congregation, but they feel a need for time in that process. They desire teaching on family life and look for models of godly families. It is also clear that the work of operating the English school at times creates a feeling that the church is secondary. This reality calls for an increased emphasis in the next few years on the church. It will require teaching on discipleship, on brotherhood relationships, and on Anabaptist distinctives. It opens the door for more frequent conversations between believers with an Anabaptist heritage and believers with a Catholic or unchurched background.

This stage in the life of the local congregation calls for clear pastoral leadership. Lavern Hershberger has pastored the church since its beginning; his love for the Lord and care for people has blessed many. For the last five years, however, we have asked Lavern to carry the additional role of field director of AIM. Though he has carried the responsibility graciously, it has created an overload for him.

To address this overload, the board plans to divide the roles of pastor and field director. Starting in the fall of 2016, Shannon Lehman will serve as interim field director. We are looking for a longer-term field director to assume responsibility by the summer of 2018. Primary responsibility for administration

of finances, the school, and team care will move to the new director, while Lavern will remain as pastor of Agape Mennonite Fellowship. This shift in responsibility will create a manageable workload for Lavern and allow him to focus energy on the needs of the church in the transitions toward more Polish leadership of the church.

We also plan to provide an extended period of refreshment and encouragement for Lavern and Lolita. Though they have had periodic furloughs since 2001, the heavy load of the last five years leaves them with a need for focused rejuvenation. In conjunction with the Agape congregation, the board is working toward a six-month sabbatical in 2017 for Lavern and Lolita and their family. Since Lavern is the pastor of the congregation, we will need to provide pastoral leadership during Lavern's sabbatical.

As we consider how to support and assist in the development of the local congregation, we anticipate several areas of focus. To support the teaching and preaching that Lavern and others do, we hope to coordinate visits by pastors and Bible teachers from other places. These men would offer in-depth teaching on various aspects of church and community life. We intend to clarify the connection between the English school and the mission of the church. In addition, we hope to develop a leadership team for the congregation that includes a Polish brother. This would develop local leadership and provide an opening for the eventual transition to Polish leadership of the congregation. Our intention in all of this is to invite men and women to a vibrant, living relationship with Jesus Christ and to call them to committed participation in His body, the church.

We are grateful for the support of God's people through the past fifteen years. We hope for your continued financial and prayer support. We invite your comments and ideas as we plan. Most of all, we ask you to pray with us for the furtherance of God's kingdom in Poland. May His kingdom come and His will be done in earth, as it is in heaven!

## **THE HOPE SINGERS VISIT**

*by Lavern Hershberger*

This year we had another very good Hope Singers tour. There were 29 singers who worked hard to be able to sing in Polish, and they blessed many people around Poland with their meaningful songs of praise and encouragement. They sang in a wide variety of settings such as churches, an evangelistic crusade tent, a museum, a music school, and a school gym. The beautiful weather for most of the tour made it a joy to travel through the beautiful country of Poland. But the highlight was sharing the good news in song, and getting to know Polish people and churches. At a number of programs we met people who had driven a few hours to hear the choir, which is quite unusual. May God be glorified!

# REFLECTIONS

by Lolita Hershberger

Fifteen years ago, as a young wife and mother to two darling little girls, I didn't know what life in Poland would hold for me. I had fallen in love with Poland as an 18-year-old while teaching English here for three months, but I knew life would be completely different living here with my family. Still, it felt like such a gift to return to this country--a gift from a Father Who directs our paths in surprising, delightful ways.

Life in Poland has been a gift--a tremendously stretching journey with rich and varied experiences. In many ways my life here is quite similar to what it would be in the states. Laundry, cooking, cleaning, and babies look pretty much the same in Poland as they do anywhere. In other ways life is wildly different. Living nearby one of Europe's great capitals, Warsaw, and knowing that city well enough to bike all around is pretty amazing. And then there is Sunday morning worship in a language that still ties my tongue in knots, and teaching children's Sunday School in two languages. Knowing the language well enough to communicate on a deep heart level, yet still searching for the elusive words in Polish to say exactly what I want to say, and then sometimes being completely misunderstood because of cultural barriers can be daunting. There are moments of praying desperately for wisdom to know how to balance life and ministry; knowing I could be meeting with someone every day to discuss life issues, but knowing too that the young and little people in our home need more than my leftover, tired time. Crying with dear friends whose memories

of home are mostly of drunken, abusive fathers and controlling mothers is a heart-wrenching thing, leading me to appreciate in a much deeper way how very precious home and family relationships are. Though there is an ocean between me and my parents and siblings, we have a heart relationship that most of my friends here will never have with their families.

One of the greatest gifts of my life here is how my perspective on the body of Christ has broadened immensely. When you meet one of God's children and feel that instant connection in spite of completely different cultural background and language, when you worship together in different ways and languages and sense the sweet Presence of His Spirit, it is an incomparable experience, a bit of heaven on earth.

I learn so much from my Polish sisters about acceptance, love, and openness. They have been patient and forgiving with me when I mess up and do a cultural no-no. They have helped me learn how to cook Polish dishes, and eagerly asked for American recipes. Our fellowship lunches are interesting combinations of Polish and American dishes. And as women everywhere, we sit together after those lunches and talk about our lives, our marriages, and our children. None of the women in our little church grew up with an example of a godly home, and we often talk about the nuts and bolts of God-centered homes. I realize over and over how rich I am with having grown up with my rich heritage of strong homes.

I could say much more, but reflecting back over the fifteen years, I can truly say that Poland has become home. Somewhere along the way it transitioned from foreign mission to home. I still cry with missing my old home, and it will always be a grief to be so far away from close family, but these people have become family to me. They are true sisters and brothers, and I will forever be grateful for the privilege of working in the Kingdom alongside them.



Anabaptist International Ministries  
P.O. Box 62  
Guys Mills, PA 16327  
Address Service Requested



## AIM Financial Report

April 1 – August 31, 2016

<b>Available balance April 1, 2016</b>	<b>\$21,304</b>
Restricted funds April 1, 2016	\$3,477
<b>Income</b>	
Unrestricted donations	\$27,892
Restricted donations	\$11,978
Hope Singers fees	\$34,511
English lessons	\$10,726
Other income	\$7
<b>Total income</b>	<b>\$85,114</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	
Hope Singers expenses	\$34,440
Labor	\$31,074
Administrative	\$1,444
Facilities	\$4,393
Personnel	\$13,310
Public relations	\$1,771
Publications	\$7,496
Supplies	\$2,492
Utilities	\$2,737
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>\$99,157</b>
<b>Net profit (loss)</b>	<b>\$ (14,043)</b>
<b>Assets released from restriction</b>	
Restricted funds August 31, 2016	\$3,477
<b>Available unrestricted funds</b>	
<b>August 31, 2016</b>	<b>\$7,261</b>

## URGENT FINANCIAL NEED

The financial report in this newsletter presents an accurate statement of AIM finances as of August 31. However, significant expenses have continued since then and have exceeded support. At press time, we have few available funds. God is providing for needs as they arise. One upcoming need is approximately \$3,000 to purchase tickets for Shannon & JoElla and their family. If you have questions about the current financial needs, please contact Matthew Mast at 814-789-4394 or [homeoffice@aimpoland.org](mailto:homeoffice@aimpoland.org).

## UPCOMING: REACH 2017

Anabaptist International Ministries will have a display and personnel at REACH 2017, a gathering of fifty conservative Anabaptist ministries and Kingdom-workers from all walks of life. Farmers, businessmen, and young men and women share the vision and link arms with missionaries in Belize, food distributors in the Ukraine, school teachers in city missions, teachers and students in Bible institutions, chiefs in boys' camps, and producers and distributors of Christian literature. More information and registration is available at [reach.fbep.org](http://reach.fbep.org). We invite you to join us!