



ANABAPTIST INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES

Pointing people to Christ

Spring 2017 | Issue 70

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IN THIS ISSUE, YOU'LL GET A GLIMPSE OF POLISH CULTURE AND RELIGION, ENJOY MEETING TWO GTE STUDENTS AND A NEW BOARD MEMBER, AND BE CHALLENGED BY SHANNON LEHMAN TO STEWARD RESOURCES FOR GREATEST KINGDOM IMPACT.

LEVERAGING RESOURCES FOR GREATEST IMPACT

by Shannon Lehman, GTE Director

Convenient travel, ease of transferring funds and staying in touch with family members, clients, and supporters would indicate that the task of carrying the Good News to the corners of the earth should be more doable than ever. But it's not. It is actually getting more difficult! Physical, geographical, and informational distance may be shrinking, but relational and emotional proximity is expanding and so subtly that we can be sitting mere inches from another person on a plane and yet remain perfectly far away from relating or even making eye contact with them. Just a few nights ago I joined seven other people in a small train booth of a red-eye train from southern Poland after spending a few days there helping my neighbor work on his mountain home. We spent approximately seven hours in those close quarters and never exchanged more than a few grunts. Admittedly it was the middle of the night and I can barely do more than grunt in Polish anyway, but the headphones and ipods made sure that we all protected our own personal space in that crowded cabin. The same technology that is making remote places and information staggeringly accessible is making the human heart more difficult than ever to access. In a foreign mission setting we are absolutely excited about the possibilities of shrinking the world geographically but does it have to come at the cost of healthy connections and communities?

This week I've been working on budget proposals for next year and our dependence on your support is obvious and it's been so for more than fifteen years now. I want to express gratefulness and admiration for your willing contributions. When brothers and sisters give their time and money toward this work it makes me ask this question: Are we casting the seed in the hearts of Polish people where it can take root and produce fruit? And if so, are we supporting the growth of this fruit with efficient and effective methods? I suggest that if we are not diligent we could be absorbing more of these resources for ourselves than

**MINSK
MAZOWIECKI**

The marker commemorating the Jews from Minsk Mazowiecki who were killed in the Treblinka extermination camp.

werealize. If so, we will grow bigger, but not healthier. And then our size and growth is not sustainable, but simply organizational and administrative mass which demands more and more resources without increasing production of fruit. And then who or what will we blame for the paltry harvest?

How often do I utilize these blessings for my own security and ease of life first, and then use the rest to get on with missional ideas? It's easy to assume that I am using these tools effectively, but with some closer scrutiny I see that my own personal habits and use of these resources has a subtle but certain effect on the coming harvest. In ministry we often think we just need more people, more money, or more time to accomplish our goals, but we need to stop and ask ourselves some honest questions. How we are doing right now with the resources that are already in our hands? We have to ask ourselves pointed questions like: What did the last hundred dollars I spent accomplish? What were my main activities in the last two hours? Or what are my most visited websites? Am I being responsible with the gifts and resources that God is already providing?

Now I see the importance of viewing these resources as sacrifices invested in the Kingdom of God. Am I working to avoid using them in ways that rob their usefulness for others or hijack our very mission? Our mission is to go and make disciples, to meet people and build relationships that have the potential to lead both of us to a fuller revelation of God and how He feels toward us. By God's help and direction we want to establish an Anabaptist community in Europe. If I ensure my own security first and then expect to use what's left to accomplish these missional goals, I will find myself short on the absolutely most necessary resource...relationships! People!

Here's a simple real life example. When I wake up in the morning, I have a strong urge to check my phone first to see if anybody tried calling or if I have any new emails or messages. I hope it will help me figure out what I should do next. I reason that I need to check to see if I'm needed somewhere or by someone since that's my job here anyway. This tool is very crucial for me to stay in touch with people and make sure I show up at the right place and on time. It simply keeps me from losing my mind...or at least my job. However, do I really want to let a digital device that beeps, vibrates, or just simply beckons for my attention constantly shape and rearrange my priorities for the day? When I resist that urge to pick it up first thing and take those moments to listen for the words of God Himself, it cuts down drastically on the confusion about what is most urgent. By declaring my dependence first to be on Christ and relying on Him for direction and affirmation, I am leveraging the tool instead of letting it manage me!

I need to see myself more as a growing plant than as a sower! I cannot make people grow and change, but I can grow and change as I submit myself to the will of the Father and enter into accountable relationships with close friends. We cannot allow our resources to insulate us from dependence on Jesus and our church family or we will have a mission, but no community.

I resolve to harness the value of your gifts and the modern resources available to spread the Gospel throughout Poland. We pray that God will bless this effort and that He will go before us and open the eyes of the blind so that the seed can indeed take root. When we share and give, both in plenty and in little, I believe the impact of our resources will be greater than the sum of individual parts, yielding a bountiful harvest.

STUDENT INTRODUCTION

Sebastian and Lukasz are unique students here at GTE. Our students usually come from affluent and upper-middle class families. Sebastian and Lukasz live in a nearby village and wanted to come for English lessons but couldn't afford the cost. In their early years they attended a village school where Ela (our school secretary at GTE) used to be the principal. She invited them to visit the school and we arranged to teach them in exchange for eggs and milk as payment for the lessons. They are a lot of fun to teach. They chatter in Polish, but are truly happy young men and love learning english through games and activities. Their mom, Ania, even brings extra milk and eggs and then we can buy them from her. It's a privilege for us to serve them and they in turn bless us with their joy and unassuming ways. Lavern normally teaches them, but he is going on a sabbatical with his family this year so we are looking for someone to help us keep making these kinds of connections. If you can help us you will get a great experience, and we'll even let you keep the milk and eggs!



VOLUNTEER NEEDED

We are looking for a volunteer to serve a two year term with us here at Gateway to English. This is not a typical teaching job. You will be spending time in group and individual classes with a focus on conversational English. We will accept interest from both men and ladies. Contact Shannon Lehman with inquiries: sklmail124@gmail.com

POLISH SOCIETY AND RELIGION

by Lavern Hershberger

In even a short visit to Poland, it quickly becomes obvious that "to be Polish is to be Catholic." The Roman Catholic church has been the dominant church in Poland for nearly 1000 years. It's been even more dominant in the past 75 years because of the effects of World War II.

Before World War II, Polish society was much more diverse. There were millions of Jews and other minorities such as Germans, Ukrainians, gypsies, and others who were killed or relocated during or after the war. There is also strong evidence throughout Poland of the presence of various churches in large numbers such as Lutheran, Reformed, Russian Orthodox, and Mennonite. Many Poles today are not aware of this aspect of their history. Today, over 95% of Poland's 40 million people are Catholic. Less than .01% are evangelical Christian. Another interesting statistic is that only 3% of Mennonites in the world live in Europe.

This lack of diversity has contributed significantly to the Roman Catholic church having even more control in the past 75 years than in earlier history. For example, priests teach religion classes in public schools. Non-Catholics are not required to attend, but they may be ostracized by their peers if they don't.

The effect of this homogeneous society today is that anyone who is a member of a minority group can feel marginalized and even rejected. Anyone who looks or acts differently than the norm may cause consternation to the gatekeepers of Polish convention. This could be anyone, but older people seem to take their responsibility most seriously.

Recently in our city of Minsk Mazowiecki, an Arabic man that we know opened a Turkish kebab shop. Soon after he opened it, the owners of his building tripled his rent. The reason given was that he is a Muslim. He had no choice but to leave Poland and move back to Belgium, where he is free to operate his business.

Last fall, a friend from Krakow heard the gospel, repented, and was baptized in an evangelical church. Her professor and classmates heard about it, and she was kicked out of her college class. She is a very sweet, open person. This is a more extreme reaction than we normally hear about, but it illustrates how ingrained the religious expectations are, and how severe the consequences can be.

The positive side of this is a strong sense of stability and personal responsibility. However, for anyone who is seeking something different, there is a price to pay for leaving the "straight and narrow" road of order and tradition. And that price usually involves family ties and traditions, the church charging you more for any services, being labeled as a sect, and being scorned by former friends and family...even when you are present. For many people, this price is simply too high, and they don't have the courage to think another way is possible.

Pray for us and our Polish friends as we seek to follow Jesus in this place.

POLISH SOCIETY INFO

Churches of Minsk Mazowiecki

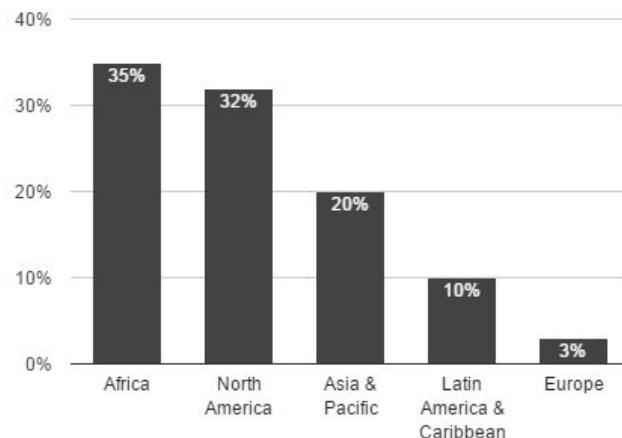
According to Wikipedia

- Roman Catholic Church (4 parishes and other structures)
- Mariavite Church (1 parish)
- Baptist (1 congregation)
- Mennonite (1 congregation)

Jewish History in Minsk Mazowiecki

In 1768 Jews were allowed as permanent residents in Minsk Mazowiecki. Before World War II there were thousands of Jews living in Mińsk and they had a general synagogue and smaller temples. The Germans secured an area of Minsk and built a Ghetto where they imprisoned all Jews from within Minsk and the surrounding area. It was liquidated on July 21, 1942. Most of the Jews were transported 80 km by train to the Treblinka Extermination Camp (see photo of monument on cover page) and there were either worked to death or gassed upon arrival. The remaining Jewish population were killed in Mińsk on January 10, 1943 (500 people) and June 5 (the last 150 people). There are no Jews living in Minsk Mazowiecki today.

Anabaptist population percentage by World Region 2015



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AIM Financial Report *December 1, 2016 – March 31, 2017*

Available balance December 1, 2016	\$7,021.00
<u>Restricted funds December 1, 2016</u>	<u>\$1,977.00</u>
Income	
Unrestricted donations	\$30,386.00
Restricted donations	\$11,548.00
English lessons	\$21,870.00
Other income	\$199.00
Total income	\$64,003.00
Expenses	
Labor	\$31,204.00
Administrative	\$1,106.00
Facilities	\$3,136.00
Personnel	\$9,469.00
Public relations	\$1,450.00
Publications	\$4,227.00
Supplies	\$840.00
Travel & events	\$667.00
Utilities	\$3,305.00
Other expenses	\$825.00
Total expenses	\$56,229.00
Net profit (loss)	\$7,774.00
Assets released from restriction	\$11,548.00
<u>Restricted funds March 31, 2017</u>	<u>\$1,977.00</u>
Available unrestricted funds	\$14,795.00

HOPE SINGERS 2018

The Hope Singers is a ministry of Anabaptist International Ministries. Touring biennially for approximately three weeks, the choir performs in various parts of Poland in diverse venues including evangelical churches and missions, Catholic churches, town halls, and historic auditoriums and palaces. The Hope Singers serves to expand the reach and influence of the Good News of Jesus Christ in Poland.

The 2018 Hope Singers tour is scheduled for **July 23-August 14, 2018**. Applications will be accepted from June 1 through October 1, 2017. Application information is available at www.hopesingers.com or on request from Lee Weaver at hopesingers@aimpoland.org.

WELCOME SAMUEL SOMMERS

Samuel Sommers joined the AIM Board in November 2016. We asked him to share a bit about himself.

I live in Hadley, PA, with my wife, Suzanne, and three daughters: Miriam (20), Veronica (18), and Emily (14). We have another daughter, Rosanne, who lives in Baltimore, and a son, Marlin, who lives with his wife and three children in Athens, TN. We attend Shalom Mennonite Church in Cochranton, PA. I am employed as a truck driver.

We have a passion to see all God's children be able to work together in the unity of the Spirit in our local congregation and also in the broader church community. We care about each person being valued and respected and able to contribute out of the talents and gifts that God has given them. Another passion of ours is to see people who don't know Jesus find life and peace in him. We love to see God transform lives so that walls are broken down and people respect each other. We love to see how God moves to answer when His people pray.

Acts 19:10 tells us that "all who lived in [Asia Minor] heard the Word of the Lord." We hope to see every person in Minsk, Poland, hear the Good News and to know another Polish person who is a loving, obedient follower of Christ. We hope for that in turn to spread across Poland.