



# ANABAPTIST INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES

Pointing people to Christ

Summer 2017 | Issue 71

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## AN UPDATE FROM THE LEHMAN FAMILY

*by Shannon Lehman*

In this report I will try to give some of the context and background to our abrupt departure from Poland in August of this year.

Eleven years ago, we took an infant into our home because her mom was incarcerated at the time of her birth. We just took the next step that was in front of us at that time and had no idea that it would profoundly influence and change our values and life plans and goals. I will refer to this girl as "J" to protect her privacy. This is because her foster/adoption case is still open and active in court. I will also need to be careful not to disclose things that are still being determined within that case.

Rather than the predicted four months, "J" was with us for the first two years of her life until her mom finally managed to get released from prison. As we had originally agreed, we had to give J back to her mom at that time. We did have limited contact with her

over the years and even spent some weekends with her and her siblings. We were extremely grateful for these times and J had a permanent place--a very high place--in our hearts. The hole she left in our hearts did not grow smaller even after God blessed us with three of our own children in the following years. We prayed for J every night and we always prayed that we could see her again soon; when we were feeling really ambitious and brave we would ask God to bring her "home" to stay. Had someone asked JoElla or me any time of any day what was the deepest desire of our hearts I guarantee that we would have both given the same answer: to have J in our home again. That was what we said if we were allowing ourselves to ask for the impossible.

We wish that all children could be in their proper biological homes so we did everything we could to support her mom in her own efforts to care for J. Eventually, though, she cut us out of J's life and we heard almost nothing from them for nearly two years. After discussing it with friends and the AIM Board, we still felt

that we should move forward with a two-year term in Poland with an understanding that, should the need present itself for us to care for J again, we would come back as soon as



arrangements could be made. Once again...I state that we all believed that to be highly unlikely at the time.

The drama started almost as soon as we were in Poland because J was removed from her mom's care and placed in custody of the state of PA in early December 2016. We continued to pray and stay in touch with the state agency and just felt things were still much too uncertain concerning J's permanency for us to make a move from Poland.

In early July everything changed when she was removed from her stepdad's home leaving her with no other options but to go "into care," meaning the foster care system. At this point we felt very strongly that the time had come to find a way to get back to the States and quickly position ourselves to provide care for J and start working on a good permanency plan for her. The AIM Board was supportive of this move, even though we all knew it was going to start the wheels of staff changeover in Poland which none of us had a solution for yet at that time.

I made hasty plans to fly to Carlisle, PA to attend a hearing for J. When the judge heard me say that we would be willing to come home and care for J he immediately ordered that she be moved into our home pending our arrival from Poland. What he did not know was that I did not have a house in Chambersburg, nor did I have a clue where I might find a job.

It was a sleepless and scary night for me as I felt the crushing fear of the risk we were being called to take. I was alone...far from my wife and family and there was no way I could reason to myself that everything was going to work out OK. I realized I was asking a lot of people to step into the gaps I would leave in Poland. I was asking my family to pack everything and move back to the US in only three weeks. I didn't know where we might live and I didn't know how I'd provide the money to pay the bills. I wrestled in the darkness with those fears and finally committed all those things which I could do NOTHING about to Jesus and fell into a fitful, but restful sleep. By the next morning I felt much better, but still felt a choking nausea every

time I thought about how "unlikely" it was that this was going to work out.

Well, by the end of the day God had provided housing and two decent job possibilities! I guess He wanted to let me choose between two instead of worrying about finding one. God hears our prayers and He is going to do something for our good. I've never felt my resources to be more inadequate than they were that night, but neither have I ever felt "live streaming" of God's care as I did throughout that next day as I just got in my car and started driving and just stopped when I saw something or someone who I thought might be able to help me get the word out of our need.

We did move to Chambersburg PA on August 5 and things are currently going very well with the legal case concerning J. We are foster parents at this time and are very close to beginning the proceedings toward permanency for J. Writing that sentence is a reality that is sinking in slowly; yes, it is the longing of our hearts, yet somehow even when we were praying for this day we didn't actually believe it was really possible. God is not limited by possibility. His power ABOUND and makes all things possible.

We have also seen His mercy and care for the church in Poland. Matt and Deborah Gingerich agreed to go to Poland and finish out our term and maybe a bit longer depending on the circumstances next summer. Our connections with our AIM staff and church are very deep and our whole family was blessed greatly by being there last year. Looking back I wouldn't want to have been somewhere else. It looks like big side loop in a path that could be more straight and efficient, yet I am confident that it is God who is bringing these desires and opportunities our way. He is making all things new and we have no reason to doubt that the best is yet to come!

Thanks to all who have cared and supported us on this journey. We will not worry about tomorrow...today has enough worry of its own.

*Z Bogiem (with God),*  
Shannon, for the Lehmans

## A MESSAGE FROM THE AIM BOARD

by Matthew Mast, Chairman

In August, the Shannon Lehman family left Poland after serving there about nine months, halfway through a two-year term as interim director. As Shannon describes, this decision was made after extensive discussion and counsel with the Board. Indeed, the Board had agreed before the Lehmans moved to Poland that certain events would call for their return to Pennsylvania. In spite of the short length of the Lehman family's time in Poland, the Board feels that they contributed meaningfully to the long-term goals of AIM. We are grateful.

The founding vision of AIM was to plant churches that would eventually have Polish leadership, and this vision has motivated our efforts since 2001. The path toward that goal is not always clear or predictable. In the article by Piotr, we see the perspective of a Polish brother on the current point in that journey. As Piotr observes, the maturing process is neither comfortable nor easy, but it is necessary. We continue to pray and work for the growth of Christ's church in Poland. Please pray with us!

## STAFF NEEDS

We have openings for two or three volunteer teachers to provide instruction in conversational English at Gateway to English, starting in August/September 2018. Teaching experience is preferred but not absolutely required. To volunteer or to recommend someone for this position, please contact Matt Gingerich at [personnel@aimpoland.org](mailto:personnel@aimpoland.org).

# GOD'S PROVISION FOR THE CHURCH

by Piotr Lawrynowicz

*Piotr (Peter) and Jola Lawrynowicz and their children began attending Agape Mennonite Fellowship in 2010. They became members of the congregation in 2012. Piotr and Jola contribute much to the life of the congregation, and we appreciate their commitment to the Lord and His people. In the comments that follow, Piotr reflects on the experiences of the last year and how God has provided for the small congregation of Agape Mennonite Fellowship. Piotr wrote in English, his second language, and we have allowed his grammar and structure to remain.*



We remember a Skype meeting between our community (Agape in Minsk) and Matthew Mast and Melvin Lehman. It was an open discussion about how to help the community in Poland care for its own growth and development. It was logical and reasonable. However, for many of us, also full of dangers and questions. After that the mission Board sent to Poland a plan of how responsibilities could migrate with proposition of six month home visit for Hershberger family. For a few months members of the community were disoriented wondering... "what's going on???"

After some time Lavern's six month home assignment became a reality, and the Poles remained alone. But did they really? No. Because there is a church - that means the body of Christ. And Christ didn't go anywhere. He is the Christ and here is his body. We as church and the Community (as Church) are still here and we will remain HIS body. Sure, we are few. Yes, this is small community and we all have some problems (who hasn't???). But we exist.

Let's gather together some facts - to be objective, let's talk about perceived negative results of Lavern's absence and mission Board decisions:

1. The Mission Board wants to be free from responsibility for the Polish Church.
2. Lavern's family is far far away and are not involved in Church life here;
3. Number of People involved in life of church is decreasing;
4. We have fewer preachers.

Many would say: IT IS TERRIBLE!!!!!!!

I prefer to say: IT IS GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO FINALLY GROW UP!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

All 4 points listed above we can minimize, if we want to stop taking and demanding. We should give, as Jesus was giving - and HE should be our template to follow.

I prefer to change the perspective of the previous 4 points:

1. The Mission Board wants to have strong partnership with Church in Poland

2. Lavern's family will be back soon and the success will be if they will see a more mature church family here. .
3. The number of people, involved in life of church should be estimated not by number but by quality.
4. We have more preachers, because more people are able to preach than we realized.

I'm pretty sure, that if everyone will give 100%, we will be an effective church. God doesn't need a large number of Christians, only 100% of few. He IS everything.

At present, our challenge is TO BE a church, that means one body - and important is to give, not to take, and what is more important is to not be focused on ourselves but on the others. That's why more missionaries or Americans is not important - No Americans, Australians, Mongolians nor anybody else are able to teach us how to give. We must learn it in our context...ourselves. Once we will learn it, more Americans (with strong spine and love) will be important to support us with good example and strong testimony. More families would be a huge asset and blessing to the church here!

The Church exists if there are people, that are gathering in the name of Jesus to praise him.

Last two weeks Phil and Linda Beiler's family spent in the community in Minsk Mazowiecki, living in Lavern's house (and enjoying nice cool shower from the leaking pipes :) ). We are very thankful for their time, and very positive influence on us. Phil and his family gave much and spread their joy on to others, and are good testimony for both mature Christians and unbelievers, and indicating how big and merciful God is. We hope to see them soon.

We as the Church are alive, always ready to listen to encouragements and corrections and able to follow Jesus.

--Piotr

*Piotr's perspective on the challenges they have faced in the last six months is a testimony to God's ability to use what appears negative in a way that honors Him. We are grateful for God's presence and grace with the Agape congregation during a challenging time.*

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



#### PRESENTATION ABOUT POLAND

Representatives of AIM are available to give presentations about the ministry in Poland. These evening presentations provide an opportunity to learn more about the work in Poland, ask questions to someone who has lived there, and gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities of God's kingdom in Poland.

To schedule a presentation, contact Matthew Mast:

homeoffice@aimpoland.org  
814-789-4394

### AIM Financial Report

April 1, 2017 – September 30, 2017

<b>Available balance April 1, 2017</b>	<b>\$14,795</b>
Restricted funds April 1, 2017	\$1,977
<b>Income</b>	
Unrestricted donations	\$39,107
Restricted donations	\$14,995
English lessons	\$11,757
Other income	\$96
<b>Total income</b>	<b>\$65,955</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	
Labor	\$42,074
Administrative	\$688
Facilities	\$4,976
Personnel	\$10,172
Public relations	\$2,293
Publications	\$8,639
Supplies	\$1,230
Utilities	\$1,575
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>\$71,647</b>
<b>Net profit (loss)</b>	<b>\$ (5,692)</b>
<b>Assets released from restriction</b>	<b>\$16,972</b>
Restricted funds September 30, 2017	\$ -0-
<b>Available unrestricted funds</b>	
<b>September 30, 2017</b>	<b>\$11,080</b>

#### CHARITABLE GIVING

Using the Charitable Gift Fund Program at Anabaptist Foundation, you can support the work of Anabaptist International Ministries anonymously with gifts of cash, real estate, stocks, mutual fund shares, or farm commodities.

Appreciated assets make a great gift, as they generate an income tax deduction for the donor and avoid loss of proceeds to capital gains tax. As a 501(c)3 public foundation, Anabaptist Foundation can accept your gifts of appreciated assets, issue you a tax-deductible receipt, liquidate the assets, and use the proceeds to support the work of Anabaptist International Ministries.

For more information, contact Anabaptist Foundation:

(800) 653-9817 ext. 208  
info@afweb.org