



# ANABAPTIST INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES

Pointing people to Christ

Spring 2018 | Issue 72

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## AN UPDATE FROM OUR NEW ADMINISTRATOR

*by Matt and Deborah Gingerich*

*In September 2017, Matt and Deborah Gingerich moved to Poland and Matt began working as administrator of AIM. Matt's previous experience in Poland and Deborah's previous experience in other cultures have enabled them to step quickly into this role and to contribute to the team. The AIM Board deeply appreciates Matt and Deborah's willingness to move to Poland on short notice; we are grateful for the vision and energy they bring to the work of AIM in Poland. -Matthew Mast*

**MATT** - When I left Poland in 2012, having spent three years as a volunteer with AIM, I had no idea if I'd ever end up living here again. I had made good friends and learned to love the country, but it was time to return to the US. In the following five years, I graduated from Faith Builders' General Studies program, began working at Faith Builders, and got married. During that time, I stayed in contact with my friends in Poland and it always had a place in my heart. Joining the AIM board in 2016 helped Deborah and I become more aware of what was happening with the mission and community in Mińsk Mazowiecki. When it became apparent that the Shannon Lehman family might need to return to the States, we

were concerned about finding someone to take their place. When the AIM board asked us to move to Poland last year to fill the role of administrator, we initially thought there was no way possible, but many people stepped in to make it a reality.

I spend most of my time as administrator overseeing the English school and supporting our volunteer team. I have been very grateful for our secretaries, Marzena and Ela, and their experience as I have learned the procedures for the school and mission. It seems like it takes about a year to really understand how things work and to start moving beyond maintenance mode. We have also been blessed with a strong team of volunteers. They are a delight to spend time with, and I find their creativity, energy, and care for their work to be energizing.

In the eight months we have been in Poland, it has been delightful to renew old friendships and make new ones, especially as a married couple. We are getting to know our neighbors, making friends with our students, and connecting with church



family. This experience of being a foreigner in Poland has made me aware again of how people show us grace by opening their lives to us and offering us friendship. This place has come to feel like home to us, and we are grateful.

What is our vision for Poland? This is a country with very traditional, very religious people who often lack personal faith and salvation and are increasingly affected by materialism and nationalism. There is a place for an Anabaptist witness in Poland. This means displaying the possibility of an everyday, vibrant relationship with God in community with other believers. We love the people here at Agape, and we find joy in worshipping with people who are actively seeking Jesus.

It remains to be seen how this community of faith will grow; people have come and gone in the past seventeen years, and we do not know what this will look like in the future. In the meantime, we are grateful to be here in Poland. We pray that we would be faithful in the things that God has given us to do today, that we would be, as Paul says in I Corinthians, “steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”

**DEBORAH** - I grew up in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, where the mountains are blue and the summers endless. I came to love other places in the world when my family moved to Kenya for several months and then to Ireland for several years when I was an adult. After getting married, I joined my husband in a job at Faith Builders, in northwestern Pennsylvania, where we got to experience life with creative and energetic young people. There, we enjoyed discussing current issues, struggles, and how to follow Jesus, with other young Anabaptists.

When we were asked in July 2017 to move to Poland that September, I had many questions about the reality of moving to another country so quickly. But I felt much peace in knowing that God would go with us. And it's true: I have experienced God's presence here with me in Minsk Mazowiecki.

Life here in Poland has been both blissful and hard. I love learning about Polish culture, food, and traditions, but I have only a basic understanding of Polish. I love talking to people

and asking them questions, but I barely know how to make basic conversation. So we live here in the paradox of being foreigners: trying hard to be at home but knowing that we will always be learning more. In this conundrum, I've found great rest in knowing that God is our home and that He understands the language of our hearts even when we don't have words to express the complicated emotions inside us. I've also found great rest in creating a home and lifestyle that feels home-y to us and to the people we work with.

One of my roles is to work with Matt in getting to know and supporting our fellow teachers at Gateway to English. We are privileged to work with an amazing and capable group of teachers. We have eaten lots of pizza together, biked countless kilometers together, and traveled together.

Other things have given me life in adjusting to Polish culture. Experiencing the seasons in another country is a great way to learn about local traditions, foods, and celebrations. Spring in Poland is full of hope and life, and this year, it came early. Instead of being gray months, March and April were sunny and warm. Currently, lilacs and lilies of the valley are in full bloom, and everyone is planting their small plot of earth. Every week, we go to our local open air market to buy vegetables and flowers and to discover what is in season.

Biking and walking in our town has helped me to see it with new eyes. Some of my favorite streets have old wooden houses on them, with elderly people sitting outside soaking up the sun or working in their garden.

Of course, building new connections with women in church, my students, and other fellow believers, has also been life-giving. Many of these women are older and wiser than I, and even though I can't communicate well with all of them, they show me love and understanding and have mothered me when I needed it. They have hugged me and held my hand when I cried.

Like anywhere else in the world, we have days here when we thrive and days that we'd rather forget. I want to keep remembering the lavish gifts that God and the people of Poland are giving to me.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**JUNE 9 & 10** - *Agape church retreat*

**JULY 2-6** - *Day camp for local children, co-hosted with the Baptist church*

**JULY 24-AUGUST 14** - *Hope Singers*

**JULY 20 & AUGUST 4** - *Three new volunteers arrive in Poland*





Family photo from a recent trip to Holland

## HOME ASSIGNMENT REFLECTIONS

by Lavern Hershberger

*The Lavern Hershberger family spent June - December 2017 in the U.S. on a home assignment. This extended time away from most responsibilities in Poland offered an opportunity to recharge emotionally and spiritually after many years of intense service. The home assignment provided a context for Lavern and Lolita to reflect on their ministry in Poland and to receive input from others. In the following paragraphs, Lavern reflects on their home assignment and its impact.*

Our family was privileged to spend 6 1/2 months in the U.S. in the second half of 2017. It was a time of renewing connections and making new ones. We were able to take a break from our normal responsibilities and share what God has been doing in our lives with family and friends. The dear brothers and sisters who spoke into our lives refreshed us tremendously!

It's hard to explain to someone who hasn't done it what it's like to spend many years in a foreign culture. We love many things about living in Poland, but we will probably never lose the feeling of being objects of curiosity to Poles. Over the years, that is tiring. It was good to be in a place where we did not have to constantly explain ourselves.

We spent the majority of our time in Georgia and also visited Virginia and Pennsylvania. The Word of Life congregation was a great blessing, took us in like family, and gave us a place to experience God's grace in a real and refreshing way. The AIM board and other brothers and sisters in Guys Mills, PA cared for us well.

In the wear and tear of daily life and ministry, it can be a challenge to reflect, to see the big picture, and to hear what the Lord may be wanting to say to us. During this time away, we were able to see with new eyes what God has for us. We were able to share about these things with the AIM board and other believers. Our service in Poland is a joint effort; we are an extension of the church, bringing the light here as we have

received it. Being with the church again face-to-face renewed those bonds and gave us fresh vision and anointing from our Father.

Sometimes the traveling was tiring, especially when we had vehicle problems. It was special to visit places like Niagara Falls and New York City with the family and see some of the sights in the U.S. Being with family, some of whom we hadn't seen for 8 years, was a major highlight. Hadassah got her driver's license, and she and Annaliese both worked in local restaurants.

We were able to talk with trusted friends about the challenges of life and ministry, and to find strengthening, hope, and healing in the Lord. Those times of sharing were the most significant part of our home assignment. It's a great gift to be able to share with someone who listens well and doesn't offer a lot of quick solutions, but points to Jesus. When we are looking to Jesus, the problems of life in a foreign country are not so heavy. He is the only hope we have to offer. The times we were able to hear His voice whispering were the most precious times of all. Sometimes it was while talking to a friend, while all alone, or while in a church service.

Jesus is there, waiting to meet you. He met us in powerful ways during our time in the U.S. Thanks to each of you who were (and continue to be) a part of that. And pray that we will continue to hear His voice every day.

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## AIM Financial Report

October 1, 2017 – March 31, 2018

|                                          |                 |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Available balance October 1, 2017</b> | <b>\$11,080</b> |
| Restricted funds October 1, 2017         | \$-0-           |

### Income

|                        |                  |
|------------------------|------------------|
| Unrestricted donations | \$51,492         |
| Restricted donations   | \$15,102         |
| English lessons        | \$33,279         |
| Other income           | \$431            |
| <b>Total income</b>    | <b>\$100,304</b> |

### Expenses

|                       |                 |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Labor                 | \$54,359        |
| Administrative        | \$1,361         |
| Facilities            | \$4,531         |
| Personnel             | \$12,671        |
| Public relations      | \$3,195         |
| Publications          | \$10,084        |
| Supplies              | \$1,412         |
| Travel & Events       | \$571           |
| Utilities             | \$3,643         |
| Other Expenses        | \$21            |
| <b>Total expenses</b> | <b>\$91,848</b> |

|                          |                |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Net profit (loss)</b> | <b>\$8,456</b> |
|--------------------------|----------------|

|                                         |                 |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Assets released from restriction</b> | <b>\$15,102</b> |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------|

|                                 |       |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| Restricted funds March 31, 2018 | \$-0- |
|---------------------------------|-------|

|                                                     |                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Available unrestricted funds, March 31, 2018</b> | <b>\$19,536</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------|

## CHARITABLE GIVING

Using the Charitable Gift Fund Program at Anabaptist Foundation, you can support the work of Anabaptist International Ministries 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:

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