



ANABAPTIST INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES

Pointing people to Christ

Summer 2020 | Issue 77

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ARE YOU CLOCKED IN?

by Shannon Lehman

We read in the book of Hebrews that Abraham looked for a city that had foundations, whose designer and builder is God. (11:10 ESV) The architect of a cathedral does not build or realize his plans alone. That would be impossible! He needs a team with focused energy to produce a final product that meets his specifications. Jesus said that He will build His church and He is asking us to help. There will be no breaks and the work cannot be stopped. We should “clock in” only once because it is going to take generations of lifetimes to complete. As the church rises from this foundation, something takes shape which is so vast and awesome that the whole world will be compelled to stop and take notice. As in the days of Noah, the world will try to tear down and defame those who labor to see the church rise, but scripture tells us that indeed every knee will bow and all will proclaim the master designer as Lord! When that day comes, will our time cards show that we were “clocked in” and counted with the laborers who built her?

The vision for an Anabaptist Church in Poland was planted in me during my time of service in 2001. Today, it is rooted in layers of story, struggle, and sacrifice. This story is not primarily about us as foreign missionaries, but one we share with real believers in Poland. In fact, we cannot flourish in Poland without their care, and it is their own stories and sacrifice that bear testimony for Christ more effectively than we can as foreigners. To be sure, the vision has flickered in times of trial and drudgery, but praise God that it is still burning.

Our family has been privileged to build up this vision in a variety of ways, but our most treasured times were when we were able to live in Poland. As our children enter their teen years, I am happy to see that they value these memories and relationships. Strong ties of personal friendship warm our hearts and fuel our vision when we read of young people at Agape Fellowship choosing to take up the mission of the church through baptism. This assures me that the Builder and Maker is indeed Jesus and that the work is not done.



Currently, our role is serving on the AIM board. I do not relish this as much as being on the ground in Poland, but the faithfulness of the church there gives me resolve to do this task with all my might. I am excited about the next few years for AIM. We are navigating the disruptions of COVID-19, but I am confident that it will not stop our work if we are doing it for the Lord.

It is exciting to see how language teaching and learning opens paths for new conversations and relationships in Poland. This happens daily through English lessons at our school and through studying the Polish language. The difficulty of language acquisition can be frustrating, but it is also a blessing because it constantly reminds us that we are first of all learners of the native culture. This is foundational to have opportunities to share the

news we came to share in the first place!

My observation and conclusion is that these foundations have been laid and established and now is the time to double down on our effort to use them to build upward and higher. We should focus first on the local church community at Agape. We must pray furiously that they will stay on the clock and preach, teach, and certainly live the Gospel of the Kingdom. It is Good News. We must also acknowledge the reality of the bad news or we will lose our dependence on and passion for Good News. We need supporters. We need people who are flexible enough to go and live in Poland. We need to find some ways for sustainable business and income so that future generations can stay in Poland. The foundation has been laid. The time to build is now. Are you clocked in?



REFLECTIONS ON SUMMER FURLOUGH

Hershberger Report

Our family traveled to the U.S. for our scheduled furlough this year. Our daughters Hadassah and Annaliese had flown to the U.S. on January 6. Hadassah began studying nursing at Pensacola Christian College, and Annaliese attended Sharon Mennonite Bible School. The rest of us were happy to join them in Georgia at the end of April. Because of COVID-19 related air travel shutdown in Poland, we drove 6 hours to Berlin, Germany to get our flight to the U.S.

Due to COVID-19, our furlough was a bit different than normal. We were not able to visit as many people as we had hoped, but we did have some really special interactions with family and a smaller number of close friends. We spent most of our time in Georgia, as well as several weeks in Virginia. There is nothing like the Blue Ridge Mountains and Shenandoah Valley! In Georgia, we were so glad to reconnect with our church family at Word of Life. Overall, it was wonderful that our whole family could be together for several months.

Lavern and Caleb returned to Poland on August 9. Three days later, Lolita fell and broke her wrist, which required surgery. We greatly appreciate all those who helped cover those costs! Lolita, Sara, and Charis returned to Poland on August 26. Her wrist is healing well, thank God. She is expecting a few more months of recovery, so patience can be a challenge! Living with limitations is not easy.

We thank God for safe and (mostly) smooth travels, health, family, friends, and brothers and sisters in Christ. It's good to be back home in Poland and we are excited about what God is doing here. – Lavern, Lolita, Hadassah, Annaliese, Caleb, Sara, and Charis



Kilmer Report

How does one capture the richness of two months spent with family and close friends? We enjoyed countless deep conversations, exploring the beauties of nature, and the blessing of being present with those we love. It was exciting to meet new little people, and see the growth of heart and mind in the children and youth we care about so much.

Our last few weeks in the US saw a lot of activity. We were able to sell our house in Sparta, WI to a friend, which meant moving out all of the possessions we left behind three years ago. Moving our belongings, finishing our brick oven, and spending time with family and friends kept our days full.

From Washington's mountains, to the catfish ponds of Mississippi, the skyscrapers of Chicago, Philly, and St. Paul, and the cold springs in Bedford, by plane and train and car and tram we made our way from one warm home to another. We were blessed to see the Kingdom growing in many homes and churches and villages, encouraged by the prayers and love we received, and inspired by the faithfulness we witnessed. –Jaden and Jewel

BAPTISMS AT AGAPE MENNONITE FELLOWSHIP



Many of us at Agape Mennonite Fellowship have been praying for years for our young people. We have taught, encouraged, and given them what we could as parents and leaders. We often wondered what was happening in their hearts and what God was saying to them. Our desire was for them to make decisions for Christ and be baptized. But for four years, no one requested baptism.

In December of 2019, one brave young lady made it known that she wanted to be baptized on her confession of faith in Christ. We prepared for the baptism, then had to cancel because of COVID-19. As time passed, two more young people expressed their desire to be baptized as well.



Due to traveling and other disruptions, we weren't able to schedule the baptisms until September. By that time, a total of nine young people had

requested baptism! Praise God!

We can clearly see God working in the lives of these young people. He has given them new life in Jesus and is leading them closer to Him. We continue to pray, teach, and encourage them to be faithful, grow, and bear fruit. We appreciate your prayers for all of us and especially for these precious souls who have made this public commitment to Christ.



REFLECTIONS FROM VOLUNTEERS



Alyssa Zimmerman writes: As I think about the part of my life spent in Europe, I am incredibly grateful for God's leading me to Poland. I think the most valuable part of my time was the number of relationships and connections that I was able to form. The people and conversations strengthened my life while also challenging me to grow; and while it was difficult to leave Poland and those connections, I am looking forward to a day when I can once again renew those friendships. One thought that was helpful when preparing for transition was the reminder that life is created with seasons. When a new season starts, it means that another season is ending. The changing of life seasons can be difficult and often requires a purposeful release. However, as with weather seasons, each life season has its beauty; and it would be foolish to refuse to acknowledge the beauty of the present because it is not the same as the beauty of the past. My desire is to face my recent transition and my future with open hands and an open heart; being filled with thankfulness for the previous season's richness, and seeing the potential for growth in the future.



Alex Yoder writes: Living in Poland for just under two years helped give me a deeper appreciation for both diversity and uniqueness. I think some of my most frustrating moments in Poland came from experiencing some type of diversity. Whether it was difficulty communicating due to the language barrier, or not knowing what to do or say because of a lack of cultural knowledge, the difference between what I was experiencing in the present and what I had experienced in the past became painfully obvious. But through these somewhat uncomfortable differences, I began to see the beauty of uniqueness. I saw an Artist who amidst his vast and diverse creation calls each of us by name. Diversity is not a battle we fight, but a symphony we join.

Even though I feel blessed to have returned with many great memories, there are still things from my life in Poland that I miss. The community involving Gateway to English and Agape is something that will always hold a special place in my heart. Their hospitality is unmatched. I also miss a few seemingly insignificant things: hearing the crosswalk signal beeping from my window, traveling by train, the sound of our apartment door lock, as well as laundry drying all over our living room. I hope I never lose the small ache in my heart when I remember my friends and experiences in Poland.

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AIM Financial Report

October 1, 2019 – September 30, 2020

<u>Available balance October 1, 2019</u>	<u>\$11,744</u>
<u>Restricted funds October 1, 2019</u>	<u>\$195</u>

<u>Income</u>	
<u>Unrestricted donations</u>	<u>\$91,847</u>
<u>Restricted donations</u>	<u>\$35,457</u>
<u>English lessons</u>	<u>\$51,321</u>
<u>Other income</u>	<u>\$32</u>
<u>Total income</u>	<u>\$178,657</u>

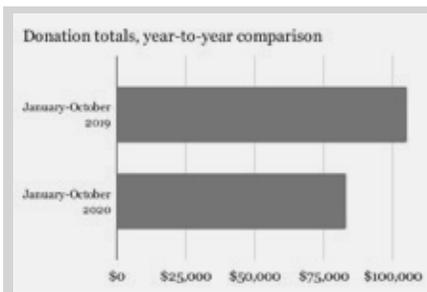
<u>Expenses</u>	
<u>Labor</u>	<u>\$127,404</u>
<u>Administrative</u>	<u>\$1,295</u>
<u>Facilities</u>	<u>\$6,485</u>
<u>Personnel</u>	<u>\$20,882</u>
<u>Public relations</u>	<u>\$2,107</u>
<u>Publications</u>	<u>\$13,421</u>
<u>Supplies</u>	<u>\$1,728</u>
<u>Travel & Events</u>	<u>\$2,002</u>
<u>Utilities</u>	<u>\$5,983</u>
<u>Other expenses</u>	<u>\$469</u>
<u>Total expenses</u>	<u>\$181,776</u>

<u>Change in Net Assets</u>	<u>\$-3,119</u>
<u>Assets released from restriction</u>	<u>\$35,652</u>
<u>Restricted funds September 30, 2020</u>	<u>\$0</u>
<u>Available unrestricted funds</u>	
<u>September 30, 2020</u>	<u>\$8,820</u>

FINANCIAL NEEDS

We are facing cash flow shortages at the end of the year as reflected in our US donations report. We are still grateful because much has been given. We are planning to launch a significant fundraising push in the next month but right now we are asking for help just to meet payroll and airfare expenses.

In addition to gifts made by check, regular donations can be made online at aimpoland.org/donate. Donors may indicate preferences for where their gifts are used (such as staff support, Gateway to English, or Seed of Truth) and AIM will honor preferences where possible. AIM reserves the right to assign all contributions where needed.



AIM operates as an auxiliary ministry of Shalom Mennonite Church (SMC) and Meadville Mennonite Church (MMC). If you would like additional information, please contact Shannon Lehman at homeoffice@aimpoland.org or (717) 816-4587.