



ANABAPTIST INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES

Pointing people to Christ

Summer 2022 | Issue 79

In this Issue

- Partnering with Other Believers in Poland
- Lavern and Lolita Hershberger Family Profile
- The Ukrainian Refugee Crisis
- Financial Report
- Personnel Needs

Partnering with Other Believers in Poland

by Lavern Hershberger

Over twenty years ago, the Hershberger family moved to Poland with the original AIM team. In a few months they are planning to move back to the United States. In this issue they reflect on the work that's been done and who they have become over the past two decades.

One of the highlights of living in Poland has been getting to know other believers. We have been privileged to experience the worldwide body of Christ in a broader and more real way. Even before we moved here, we had contact with local believers who helped us get settled. Being dependent on others taught us a new appreciation for the body of Christ.

Here in Mińsk Mazowiecki, we have related most closely with the Baptist church. Sebastian Zima, the founding pastor of the church, moved to Mińsk with his wife Dorota in July 2001, the same month our team did. Dorota helped us get jobs teaching English, taught Polish to our team for many years, and was a good friend. Because of these relationships, we have been able to organize a 5-day Bible Day Camp with the Baptist church for several years. This has been a mutually encouraging relationship, for AIM and for Agape Mennonite Fellowship.

In 2004 Lloyd Kauffman directed the first Hope Singers choir. The choir has toured every two years since except for in 2020. We have greatly appreciated meeting believers all around Poland, working with pastors, and sharing God's love in song in many different places. Music truly is a universal language!

In 2010, we began publishing *The Seed of Truth* magazine. We are currently distributing 4000 copies per month. This has increased our contact and cooperation

with believers throughout Poland, and given us an open door in many places. We regularly receive feedback from readers sharing that they find *The Seed of Truth* to be a source of true encouragement. Some people say it's the main thing they read besides the Bible. We've often heard that *The Seed of Truth* has more practical and helpful articles than other publications. Thank God for the ministry of *The Seed of Truth* in Poland.

More recently, we have developed a relationship with a Plymouth Brethren (Wolnych Chrześcijan) congregation in Warsaw. We have been involved in some of their summer camps, and they have helped with teaching at our Winter Bible School or other events. We as a mission team and church have been encouraged by their sincerity, zeal, simplicity, and friendship.

In a country where there are so few evangelical believers, the support and fellowship of people from many places and groups is very meaningful. I have been privileged to attend several weekends of prayer and fasting with a group of about seventy men from many different backgrounds and churches all over Poland. This informal retreat has been going on for fifteen years, and the men attending say it has helped them more than anything else in their lives. Just like evangelicalism in Poland, this meeting is authentic, informal, and personal. Many attendees are first generation believers, who are willing to step out in faith despite difficulties.

Lolita and I have also had some opportunities to attend conferences and events for American missionaries in Poland. These connections are incredibly special because the mutual understanding of what mission life is like gives us an unique bond with others in ministry. God has touched us in powerful ways through some of these connections, and we consider some of these people to be close friends.

What does the future hold? I pray that the mission and church in Mińsk Mazowiecki will continue to give and receive, reach out, and build relationships with many believers. We are stronger when we work together with others for the Kingdom of God.

LAVERN AND LOLITA HERSHBERGER FAMILY PROFILE

As they begin the process of moving back to the U.S. in 2023, Lavern and Lolita Hershberger and their family share how living here in Poland has shaped their lives.

Annaliese (21): Life in Poland is very different from anything I have seen or experienced in the USA. There are so many bonuses to growing up in a European country including the incredible history and architecture. I have always appreciated the attention to every detail, be it in art, architecture, or relationships. Seeing the pride that Polish people take in their history and national heroes makes me thankful to live in this country.



Annaliese Hershberger with Vera from Kharkiv
Many of the Ukrainians we host have become like family



It is a bit difficult to sum up what life in Poland is like for me because it is so much more than words. It is a feeling of beautiful hospitality, even if their shelves are almost empty. It is in the amusing conversations with random grandmas on the street and in shops. It is how they have taught me to not be ashamed to have an opinion and share it.

Living here has given me such an appreciation for authentic relationships and the steps you have to take before you share your heart and call someone a friend. For you as a reader, this is only an article in a mission newsletter, but please understand that there is so much depth to every one of these points. Poland is not simply a country you can arrive in and feel at peace and at home. My journey to the deep love and respect for my home has been long, but I am more grateful for my life here than I could describe. Poland and Mińsk Mazowiecki will forever be my family and my home.

Caleb (17): I have greatly enjoyed my time here in Poland. My favorite aspects have been the rich history and cultural diversity, as well as the beautiful places and interesting people. I am thankful to have been

able to serve God in this wonderful country, and will be sad to leave.

Sara (14): Life in Poland has been wonderful for me. I love all the new experiences I have had, the beautiful places I have seen, and all the interesting people I have met. Learning the language is difficult, but also enjoyable. One of my favorite things about living here is all of the opportunities to travel and see new places. I love the friends I have made, and I love experiencing all the different cultures. I am so glad that Poland is my home.

Charis (6): Learning Polish is hard, but fun. I really like hiking in the Polish mountains and riding in a sleigh in the snow. I like Warsaw Old Town and how it is full of Christmas lights. I love my home because it's so warm and cozy.

Lolita: Sometimes, as a family, we sit together in the evening and talk about the highs and lows of the day. It is a helpful way to process and talk through the good and not-so-good moments that have happened. So, in reflection over the past months, here are a few of the highs and lows we have experienced as a family and church.

The pandemic and resulting lockdowns and isolation were certainly low times for all of us, but the corresponding high of that for our little church family has been a renewed delight in spending time together. Bonfires, barbecues, and informal gatherings happened a lot last summer as we made up for lost time. We are closer than ever in spite of the pandemic and that is certainly a good gift from our Father. Seeing a number of young people added to the Kingdom and being baptized in the past two years was a beautiful gift as well.

Another low of the past months has been decreased contact with the wider community of believers in Poland, so we were

especially happy for the opportunity our family had last summer to help in leading a Christian music camp for young people. It was a really wonderful time of connection and partnering with brothers and sisters from other areas of Poland. Our children are enjoying new, ongoing friendships as a result of the camp. Several of those new friends joined us for our winter Bible School in February, and it was really special to see those friendships deepening for our children.

In the past two years our family has walked through some painful times of change and transition. Our oldest daughter left home to study nursing at Pensacola Christian College. Saying goodbye to her and adjusting to our new normal with Hadassah living an ocean away certainly felt like a low, but it is wonderful to see her dream of nursing study coming true. Our son Caleb will be joining her there this fall, in the mechanical engineering program. These changes in our family have not been easy, but we have been discovering anew the truth of 'in every change He faithful will remain!'

Another monumental change facing our family and church is that after twenty years of life in Poland, God is leading us to move back to the U.S. We have sought the Lord earnestly through the past months, and we are at peace with our decision, although it is heart wrenching to think of leaving this country, home, and church that we love so much. Please remember us in prayer as we face the mountain of decisions and painful conversations that need to happen. We are leaning hard on Jesus, our faithful Shepherd. Thank you for your care and support.

Lavern: This past year has been another year of experiencing God's blessings! We have enjoyed special times with Christian friends new and old, and opportunities to share the Good News with people far and near.

This year we distributed 65,000 Bibles that arrived on three semi trailers. A special privilege we had was to distribute 32,000 complete hardcover Bibles all over Poland in collaboration with Eastern European Mission. These Bibles were printed in Belarus and arrived on semi trailers. We then distributed them for free to various churches, individuals, and ministries throughout Poland. What a blessing to be able to bring God's Word to the hearts and hands of many people.

This year has also been significant as we have sought the Lord regarding our future as a family, as we have felt Him clearly leading us to move back to the U.S. This is very difficult for us! We have lived here since 2001. Three of our five children were born in Poland. Poland is home! Yet we trust Him to lead us, step by step, as He has in the past up to this point. At this point, we are planning to move in January 2023. There are so many questions that we don't have answers for. But we know that whatever happens, He is in control, and there we find our security.

Thank you all so much for your support. May God be glorified.

UKRAINIAN REFUGEE CRISIS

We are deeply grateful and overwhelmed at your generosity in supporting us as we serve Ukrainians fleeing war. Now, over seven months after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the initial urgency of refugee relief has settled into a longer-term routine of supporting refugees as they try to find homes and jobs here in Poland, try to return to their homes in Ukraine, or emigrate to places like the US and Canada.

Donations like yours are allowing us to coordinate refugee hosting in rental apartments in Warsaw and in our town of Mińsk Mazowiecki. Our church members have taught Polish and hosted refugees, and on the AIM team, the Hershberger family have been our front-line people for refugee aid. Lavern has spent many days in Warsaw, meeting refugees and helping them make connections for the next step of their journey. Sometimes this means helping them buy train tickets, driving them to the bus station, or finding them a place to stay for the night. Annaliese volunteered at the border, welcoming mothers and children as they first arrived in Poland. Lolita prepared apartments for new arrivals and fed hungry refugees, besides being a wife and mom. Mark and Janae Kauffman from Tennessee have recently joined the AIM team in order to take over Lavern and Lolita's role in refugee aid.



Mark and Janae with Ukrainian friends

We have also been able to partner with individuals and organizations in refugee aid. We have been able to give financially to churches that are welcoming refugees and sending aid into Ukraine, like the Baptist church in Chełm, Poland, and Undaunted Love Ministries, among others. Matt and Lavern provided contacts and logistical support for International Host Connection as they relocated an orphanage to a new location in our area. Other members of our team have hosted overnight guests who are volunteering in some way.

As you read the news and hear refugees' stories, pray for the people of Ukraine. Also, pray for us, that God could use our small offerings of help in this crisis, and that we would have wisdom and endurance in serving sustainably.

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AIM Financial Report

January 1 – June 30, 2022

<u>Available balance January 1, 2022</u>	<u>\$39,113</u>
<u>Restricted funds January 1, 2022</u>	<u>\$0</u>

Income	
<u>Unrestricted donations</u>	<u>\$84,428</u>
<u>Restricted donations</u>	<u>\$303,879</u>
<u>English lessons</u>	<u>\$29,519</u>
<u>Other Income</u>	<u>\$38</u>
Total income	\$417,864

Expenses	
<u>Labor</u>	<u>\$70,568</u>
<u>Administrative</u>	<u>\$2,084</u>
<u>Facilities</u>	<u>\$3,917</u>
<u>Personnel</u>	<u>\$17,076</u>
<u>Public relations</u>	<u>\$2,221</u>
<u>Publications</u>	<u>\$4,044</u>
<u>Supplies</u>	<u>\$687</u>
<u>Travel & Events</u>	<u>\$1,102</u>
<u>Utilities</u>	<u>\$3,241</u>
<u>Ukrainian Refugee Exp & Grants</u>	<u>\$60,724</u>
Total expenses	\$165,664

Change in Net Assets	\$252,200
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<u>Assets released from restriction</u>	<u>\$83,390</u>
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<u>Restricted funds June 30, 2022</u>	<u>\$220,489</u>
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Available unrestricted funds June 30, 2022	\$70,824
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PERSONNEL NEEDS

We have an opening for a male volunteer teacher to provide instruction in conversational English at Gateway to English, starting as soon as possible, for a two-year term. Teaching experience is preferred but not absolutely required.

To volunteer or to recommend someone for these positions or for more information, please contact Matt Gingerich at personnel@aimpoland.org

