



# ANABAPTIST INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES

Pointing people to Christ

Summer 2023 | Issue 79

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## Our Vision for Community

*An Interview with Jaden and Jewel Kilmer*

**How have you experienced Polish people welcoming you into our city and church community?**

**Jaden:** I am not immune to the feelings of isolation a foreigner feels. Yet from the day I moved here in August 2018, I felt welcomed. We benefited from the foundation that others, especially the Lavern and Lolita Hershberger family, had laid. Our church family here at Agape rallied around us and would have helped us above and beyond what we asked for. A visitor to Poland may notice the straight faces and hear about the importance of formal language. But I have special memories of being welcomed into strangers' homes.

**Jewel:** People are fairly gracious with the language difference and our stumbling around in Polish, while calling us to study more and use the language. Many in our city know us or know who we are. Cashiers have gone out of their way to help me, showing on their fingers the amount I owed, picking through my handful of change to find the correct amount, or using some English to help me.

Our students invite us into their homes; they teach us Polish words, culture, history, and care about us and our lives. One of our secretaries likes to teach us how to cook Polish food like crepes or potato cakes.

It is difficult for church life to have people coming and going every year and getting to know someone who will leave again soon. Our church families are kind and open, encouraging us and spending time getting to know us and helping us orient ourselves here.

**How do you try to create small spaces of community with other people in your daily life?**

**Jewel:** I do this by checking in with people, following up after a conversation, remembering on Tuesday to ask them how the doctor appointment was they told me about on Sunday. I try to pray with others, especially after a conversation about their worries or relationships with other people. Enjoying food or tea together, hosting, being hosted, or meeting at a coffee shop, letting others care for me, or to see my

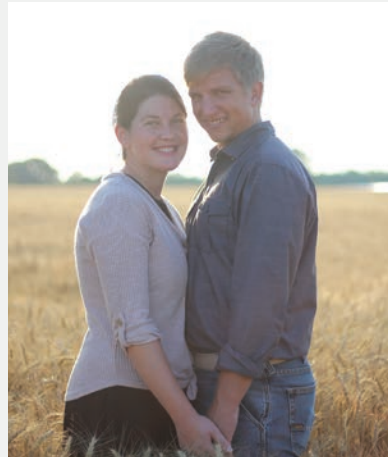
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## Reflections on Our Year in Poland

*by Janae Kauffman*



How do you condense a year full of experiences, impressions, and people, into a few words? If I would put our experience in Poland into one word, I think the word “expansion,” would describe it best.

There have been so many new friends, American, Polish, and Ukrainian to meet. So many new cities to explore. An

entire new language to learn. Experiencing God’s kingdom in an entirely different context.

And then there were all the small answers we had for life that disappeared in the face of larger, more relevant questions. Who is God? Who am I? What do I have to offer those around me? How can God even use small broken human beings to accomplish his work? Questions brought into focus by the experience of being dropped into new territory far away from everything familiar and safe.

Poland also introduced us to city life, to Google Translate, to pointing and waving our hands helplessly at produce in the market, to pierogi, to backpacking trips with friends, and so many more wonderful things.

Our questions have not all been answered, but our souls have been expanded. Some days we still do not know what we have to offer those around us. Some days we still feel too small and broken for God to use us. But if our year in Poland has taught us anything, it has taught us this: whatever we have is all God needs.



Farewell to Lizzie Yoder who returned to the US in July, after completing two years of service.”

vulnerability and weakness—all these things have drawn me into a circle of community here.

### What dreams do you have for your family and its experience of community?

**Jaden:** Living in an urban space is significant for me. Of course, we can also have community in rural settings as my own roots are in the country and there are parts of that I miss. Here in Mińsk Mazowiecki we live on the fourth floor of a block of flats containing 30 apartments. Getting out of the house is more complicated and finding nature to spend time in takes more effort. A garden and chickens are out of the question. But I cannot get away from the reality that there are an estimated thirty thousand people (out of forty one thousand) in my city living in apartments. I would like to get to know my neighbors through the sharing of food. Jewel and I love to cook and in particular we love making bread and cakes. Both of those things are very important to Polish culture. That is a practical dream I have for my family in how we could connect with our community.

**Jewel:** I want our home to be a safe place for people to come, be themselves, and receive support, with our children as an important part of this. I want our family to be open and compassionate, able to receive care from others, and committed to building relationships with those around us. I dream of our church community being a place where we can confess our sins and be honest about our failings and weaknesses, supporting each other through prayer and encouragement. I pray that we can find healthy ways to talk through differences.

### Why does living in community matter?

**Jaden:** The appeal to live an independent life is strong. Who naturally wants to ask for help? Who loves the inefficiency of waiting to act until everyone has spoken? Who wants their physical and emotional space infringed upon? To welcome others requires a leap of faith, and it doesn’t always “work.” But a church is a community of believers who name Jesus as their Lord. I think we can welcome others into that community even as we take the community to our homes and work. The times I have let go of independence have been hard but rich. I challenge you as I challenge myself to consider ways of living that bring others into this community.

## Experiencing Community through Sports

*by Curt Kreider*

From my limited observations, I have found that Polish people tend to be very active and more health-aware than Americans. Many of my students engage in multiple sports activities on a regular basis. One popular sport among my students is running, and that has generated more than one interesting conversation. They put me to shame with their dedication to the sport, with some of them running 2,000+ miles per year. They compete in marathons and even ultra marathons as if they are nothing more than a leisurely stroll through the park. Recently, I had an opportunity to run in a 5k race right here in Mińsk Mazowiecki. This race is a yearly community event with multiple distances and several thousand participants. Kids line up along the street to hand out water to the runners. Several of my students were involved in this event as well. It was a great feeling to have a student friend standing by, cheering me on. I hope to participate in more of these events in

the future. Students notice and appreciate when we intentionally do things to connect with them.

We recently had another intriguing idea, and I don't think this has garnered much attention yet, but maybe it will in the future. We have a beautiful park in Mińsk, with plenty of greenspace and a few small recreational areas. Sadly, it lacked a functional tennis court, until now. At one time there was a tennis court, but the net system was long gone and weeds had grown up through the concrete. We attacked it, clearing away the weeds and cleaning the surface. After a bit of hard work and a few dollars spent on a portable tennis net, we have a functional tennis court where for a long time there was nothing but a forlorn slab of concrete. It still needs a bit of work, but we've had some good times with it already. It's satisfying to find little ways like this to give back to the community.

## Refugee Care Update

*by Matt Gingerich*

What is happening with AIM's refugee relief activities one and a half years after Russia's invasion of Ukraine? The last year has seen refugee care shift from crisis relief to longer-term projects, as very few new refugees are coming into Poland. Some Ukrainians have returned to their home country and found ways to restart their lives at home. Some refugees have moved to other countries with aims of settling there at least until their homeland is peaceful again. Those who remain in Poland either feel unsafe in Ukraine or have lost their homes and do not have the means to return.

We currently provide housing for 10-15 people, renting several apartments in town. As Ukrainians begin new lives in Poland, they need to learn Polish, and we have been able to work together with a local group of volunteer teachers to provide free Polish lessons. Meeting together, drinking tea, and making friends is also an important part of refugee care. The AIM team is all involved in this to varying degrees, as well as Agape Church. It is a rare Sunday now when none of our Ukrainian friends attend.

Beginning in August, I took over the role of Ukrainian refugee care from Mark and Janae Kauffman when they returned to the US. I am grateful for the generous donations that have allowed us to continue to care for Ukrainians fleeing war. It is a privilege to care for the "strangers and sojourners" who have become our new neighbors.



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## AIM FINANCIAL REPORT

January 1 - June 30, 2023

<b>Available balance January 1, 2023</b> .....	<b>\$94,896</b>
Restricted funds January 1, 2023 .....	\$156,744
<b>Income</b>	
Unrestricted donations .....	\$51,294
Restricted donations .....	\$44,431
English lessons .....	\$30,634
Other Income .....	\$210
<b>Total income</b> .....	<b>\$126,569</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	
Labor .....	\$62,966
Administrative .....	\$2,555
Facilities .....	\$3,610
Personnel .....	\$22,629
Public relations .....	\$2,512
Publications .....	\$4,430
Supplies .....	\$1,281
Travel & Events .....	\$1,647
Utilities .....	\$5,761
Ukrainian Refugee Exp & Grants .....	\$58,164
Other Expense .....	\$4,046
<b>Total expenses</b> .....	<b>\$169,601</b>
<b>Change in Net Assets</b> .....	<b>\$-43,032</b>
<b>Assets released from restriction</b> .....	<b>\$78,573</b>
Restricted funds June 30, 2022 .....	\$122,602
<b>Available unrestricted funds</b>	
<b>June 30, 2022</b> .....	<b>\$86,006</b>



## LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS

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 **Matthew Gingerich** at [personnel@aimpoland.org](mailto:personnel@aimpoland.org).

PERSONNEL NEEDS

AIM