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Global Academic Director ... *Teaching with a Mission*

May 2011

Poland: A Personal History of Mission, Part 1

The year was 1990. The place was Drexel, North Carolina. We were at the time engaged in a church-planting ministry with Community Baptist Church, inviting on one occasion our long-time friend Pastor John Crabbe to hold a series of evangelistic meetings. Pastor Crabbe had for many years traveled abroad as a missionary encourager and an itinerate preacher. In 1990 he planned an extensive trip to Eastern Europe. The mission comprised nine countries (Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Italy, Czech Republic, and Lichtenstein), delivering relief items (clothes and medical supplies), visiting missionaries and orphanages, while preaching in numerous churches along the way. This was my opportunity for extensive cross-cultural experience. I had previously been to El Salvador (1988), but never to Europe. Besides occasional preaching, my role was the driver. I transported the team and conveyed the supplies covering 6,000 kilometers in a wide-range of adverse weather and road conditions (there's a book just in those experiences!). In all, this was a tremendous opportunity for exposure to Christianity outside its familiar American context. More importantly, this was my initial entry into Poland (a nation where our family would live in 1994-95, and where we would return on numerous occasions for years to come) where we spend three days, preaching in Katowice and visiting the Birkenau death camp in Oświęcim (Auschwitz). I remember those early days in Poland, now over twenty-years ago. The death camp, now a modern witness to the atrocities of WWII, made such an indelible impression on mind. More than this, the oppression of Russian occupation and the godless blanket of communism muted the passionate hearts of the Polish people, repressing them into a quiet despair. The oppression was palpable, as though it took on a life of its own. You could feel it with cascading waves of depression. Poland was shrouded beneath a canopy of Marxist and socialistic control. At this juncture in her history, however, she could boast of two promising claims on the future. The first was an electrician working in the Lenin Shipyards in Gdąnsk. His name was Lech Wałęsa. As a trade-union activist, Wałęsa's defiance finally led to the formation of the Solidarność (Solidarity) movement and semi-free parliamentary elections in 1989. Wałęsa successfully ran for the re-established office of President in 1990 and won. The once glorious days of the proud nation seemed poised for a dramatic return. Second, as a nation steeped in Roman Catholicism, Poland boasted of being the origin of the reigning Pope, John Paul II (the second longer documented pontificate, 26 years). Yet, in Poland, a nation of 34 million Christians in a population of 38 million, though most Poles embrace Catholicism, the grip of allegiance was beginning to loosen in 1990. Attendance to mass services began a precipitous decline during this period, a decline that continues to the present. In 1989 mass attendance was at 58%. By 2008, mass attendance fell to a stunning level of 28% of professing Catholics. A fledgling but steadily growing evangelical movement of 95,000 believers, growing at an annual rate of 1.5%, is a radiant light, penetrating the darkness and gaining strength. It offers the hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ to a nation caught in the tenuous position of having thrown off the mantle of communist repression, but retaining the domination of a Catholicism that is without relevance to her present hopes and aspirations. What was needed in 1990 and what remains as Poland's greatest need is the living Lord Jesus. Economically and politically, Poland longs to align herself with the west. Though she has changed in twenty years, becoming a testament to foreign capitalistic investment and heralded as a model for political renewal, Poland remains as the woman at the well, thirsting for that living water, the Lord Jesus who alone can satisfy (**John 4:13-14**).



Preaching with translator in 2008.

Dr. Douglas A. Blanc, Sr.

Prayer & Praise

- Praise the Lord for upcoming opportunities to present the ministry in local **churches**.
- Please pray regarding the upcoming itinerary in **Poland** and **Germany**. Pray for safe travel, good flight connections, prepared hearts to receive the Word, and a blessed time of fellowship among the believers.
- Please pray for a growing network of ministry **partners**. We appreciate everyone who prays regularly for us. We are grateful for those who support this ministry with faithful love gifts (**1 Cor 3:9** and **Phil 4:17**).
- We are thankful for the **Bible study group** that meets weekly in our home. We're in a study on the book of Revelation as it relates to being *A Mission Manual for the Follower of Jesus*. We are currently considering the "Theology" of Revelation by looking at the names of God contained in the book. For example, with regard to God as "Almighty," did you know that of the 61 occurrences of the word "throne" in the NT that fully 46 appear in Revelation? God wants us to know that He is sovereign in our lives and is guiding our every step toward a purposeful end. His purpose may conflict with our own, but it is intended to form His best in our lives for His glory (**1 Cor 10:31**).
- Praise the Lord for the privilege of preaching at **Community Bible Church** (Ft. Plain, NY) on Mother's Day. Three first-time visiting moms responded for salvation during the decision time. Pray for their follow up and growth in the Lord. Pray also for this fellowship of believers and their pastor, Wally Braemer.



Itinerary

May 29, 2011	Killawog Baptist Church (Killawog, NY)
May 30-July 1, 2011	Teaching Ethics and at Fulton-Montgomery Community College (Johnstown, NY).
June 12, 2011	Grace Baptist Church (Tully, NY)
June 26, 2011	Central Baptist Church (Binghamton, NY)
July 14-17, 2011	Preaching in local churches in Germany
July 18-August 1, 2011	Preaching in local churches and ministering at a children's camp in Bielice, (south-west) Poland
August 14, 2011	Calvary Baptist Church (Deruyter, NY)
August 21, 2011	Hedstrom Baptist Church (Cheektowaga, NY)
August 18-25, 2011	Mission Training School and Leadership Conference at IGM Mission Central (Rochester, New York).
August 28, 2011	Lester Baptist Church (Windsor, NY)
September 7-December 16, 2011	Teaching Ethics and Comparative Religion at Fulton-Montgomery Community College (Johnstown, NY).
October 30, 2011	First Baptist Church (Cincinnati, NY)
January 29, 2012	Grace Baptist Church (Guilderland, NY)

Tax-deductible contributions may be made by check and payable to **Independent Gospel Missions**. Please write Doug & Sally Blanc support (or travel) in the memo and send to:

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