

Dear friends,

We are happy to serve the one Lord who called us and provides for us. He also supports, guides and cleanses his Church. We can see that COVID is also God's instrument of trial for the church.

Some churches will emerge from the pandemic weakened and others will emerge stronger. It all begins with what the foundation was of the teaching in these churches: was it providing entertainment for people that they missed during the pandemic, or was God's Word, which has no limitations, the foundation? We live in an age where, in a sense, the house of the builder in Jesus' illustration is undergoing a great test. Whether it will withstand or not depends on what foundation it was built on.

Recently, in our country we have been dealing with a big discrepancy in relation to the pandemic and vaccinations, which caused various churches' decisions to divide people.

Some Christians consider the vaccine to be a mark of Satan, and others fear it because of the short time it took to prepare. However, there are those who believe that this is a state of necessity, and regardless of the fears it is important to stop the spread of the virus by taking the vaccine.

In our country, this discussion is very heated because the numbers shown are difficult to understand and politicians are caught in manipulation and corruption. Because of these kinds of situations, the authorities collapse. Even the medical world is arguing about the reliability of COVID tests and the safety of mRNA vaccine. People are increasingly looking to pastors for answers.

We are all observing social turmoil and fear in people, encouraged by the media. We can see it too in almost every country in Europe; this is what is also transferred to the church. We wonder what the situation is like where you are. Is there similar division, or discussion?

From this week on, we are dealing with a "social rebellion" in our country, as hotels, tourism, restaurants and other companies have decided to open up despite the ban, evoking their constitutional rights. It is similar with some churches which have decided that it is better to obey God than people.

Our church council and leaders met to review the legal, health, and spiritual implications. Of course, we needed to consult legally and medically, and we considered the matters of the spirit ourselves by applying a spiritual measure to spiritual matters, i.e. the Holy Scriptures.

We have chosen a path for ourselves that is common sense; not a path of rebellion, but rather of cooperation with local authorities and seeking mutual understanding. It is a way of respect in love.

It is remarkable that while some of us differ in our views, our church remains united, and there are no extreme behaviours or disputes that are so often seen in our country, even in the churches these days.

We've had two not-so-crowded Sunday services for a while now, and we have a solid group of people willing to serve. The year of the pandemic has highlighted a new, dedicated group of people who support us in organizing services, broadcasting live services, and in preaching and deaconship.

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect. (1 Peter 1:15)

We, as an evangelical community, feel it very strongly that in these difficult times we are to devote our hearts to Christ, always being ready to defend the Gospel, which we are to do with kindness and respect for people, and with fear of God, because it is His Gospel that we share. We want to proclaim the Good News because we can see how sensitive our fellow Poles are at this time to its content.

The Catholic Church has cancelled successively the holy communion, carolling, and confession; many churches were closed, despite the fact that the regulations only limited the number of attendees. Poles are frustrated and tired with the situation. It is estimated that over 1.5 million people suffer from depression and those are only the diagnosed cases.

That is why we pray for those who are sick; I have pastoral conversations with various families, also from other churches that are closed. They ask for spiritual help that they can't seem to get anywhere else.

This year, we have also planned a Bible Exhibition that we want to organize together with the city authorities. The city authorities included our event in the catalogue of cultural events in our region. It will be an exhibition combined with individual evangelism and the distribution of the New Testament. It will be similar to the one that we organized on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

Our prayer requests:

We continue to ask for prayers for married couples and families experiencing difficulties at this time. We pray for the economic situation of our country. We pray for rulers that they will have wisdom from God to make the right decisions.

We are still praying for Grzegorz and Agnieszka, who I hope will be baptized in the spring. We pray for Adrian who will soon be released from prison (I emailed you his testimony in my last prayer letter); we pray for Arthur who comes to our services, but he is very lost in theological matters because he spent two years in a sect.

We are praying for our new project "The Church of the Street" that we want to start this year. As part of it, we want to organize services in the park, on the market square and in various public places, as well as distribute Christian literature and the Bible.

We are praying for the ministry preparation course ending this year at the Ruptawa center. We have had two people now who have become pastors after this course, and several others are elders or deacons.

We pray for Sunday school teaching which is possible again. As the youngest are back to school, we can also start running Sunday school again. These youngest children need our prayers. We see regression in contacts with peers.

We pray for our Church Building Fund. The funds required to buy another, bigger church building are still not enough, but this year we want to modernize our existing building a bit, which should give us more space. This, however, will require us to move out of our apartment.

We are constantly looking for a two-family home with our son and daughter-in-law so that we can get a mortgage together and free up the entire church building for all the church activities. Unfortunately, there is nothing suitable nearby. We feel helpless, because we don't know what to do ... on the one hand, when we find something nearby, it is too expensive, or if it is a good price, it is too far from the city (over 20 miles), the church and workplaces. We ask for your prayers on this matter. Every Monday evening (it is morning where you are) we have a prayer meeting for the intentions of our spiritual work, plans and challenges that lie ahead.

Thank you for all your support and prayers. May God bless you and guide you.

Tomasz and Kamilla



