

Welcome to Poland

By Gustaw Cieslar

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Welcome to Poland, welcome to Krakow, the former capital of our country.

It is a great joy to host such a diversified international delegation from around 18 various nations, representing the evangelical body in Europe. I hope that the time of your stay in this town will be pleasant and well remembered.

The place of our meeting unique. Poland has a long common history with the Jews. Krakow was one of the great and vibrant Jewish centers. After the dark time of WWII and the time of communism, Jewish community in Krakow is reviving again, with new synagogues and Jewish life.

The Baptists in Krakow own a debt to a Jewish brother, because as they were looking before the War for a place for worship they found one in this community, at Dajwór Street. It was a small light, but not sufficient for that dark time.

Talking about Jewish evangelism, our Christian responsibility to our Jewish brothers and sisters, it is difficult to think about the future without meditation on the past, especially when the Auschwitz concentration camp is only 75 km away. May the Lord give us strength to take the right position in the face of growing antisemitic spirit.

We own a big debt to the Apostles, for solving the theological issue about pagan conversion in the first century. However in the coming ages the wall grew again. We know that the church was not handling the Jewish conversion properly, and forgot Paul's teaching about the tree and its branches (Romans 11). It is good to see changes in our times, in the Roman Catholic Church after the Vatican II and also through the work the Lausanne Committee on Jewish Evangelism, and number of other mission organizations.

I regret I cannot join the conference, as evangelism to the Jews is so close to my heart. My personal way of conversion started through leaning about the Jewish history and studying of the Bible, where I clearly saw God in action. I hope that this conference will help to increase our understanding of God's will for Israel and the nations in our times, and also of our own responsibility for witness.

To the time when He will come again.

Gustaw Cieslar
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