



POLAND

EVANGELICAL MISSION

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Let Me Tell You My Story... by Russ Brown



Russ and Polish pastor Daniel Cichocki.
Russ brings the Word and Daniel translates.

It dates me. I'm no longer young. In fact, some people may even think I'm getting old!

I was born in Chicago, IL during the big war, WWII. Before you knew it, I was celebrating being five years old. I had an average lifestyle. We moved a lot.

My dad couldn't fight in the war due to a heart murmur. He traveled into Canada as part of a crew that built the Peace Bridge on the Alcan highway to Alaska. It was part of the war effort. But then, before you knew it, the war was over. Those who survived the war returned home, but some paid the ultimate price.

My dad was one of the returnees. His return to the family allowed us to lay hold of a normal lifestyle. We traveled a lot following his return home. We followed jobs, he was an iron worker. We settled for good in a bedroom community of Cincinnati, OH. Things seemed quite normal; that normalcy would have a shorter life than some. Ultimately my dad left our family, and the peaceful lifestyle we thought we had embraced was severely challenged. In fact, it was ended. For three or four years, my brother and I didn't know where our father was. We would write letters to him, send them to our paternal grandmother, and she would forward them to him. It was an unsettling thing. We would receive a gift from my father in the mail around Christmas time.

In the summer of 1958, we had to draw the conclusion that perhaps he wasn't coming home at all. I was approaching my 16th birthday. Fortunately I had friends and physical activities that kept me busy. It was a lonely time. Quite unexpectedly, one of the highlights of that summer was an impromptu vacation to spend a couple weeks with my paternal grandparents. I was there two or three days when Grandma said, "Sunday is coming. We'll go to church together." I didn't know what to say, but I knew I had to go out of respect for my grandmother - she was the boss. So Sunday came, and we went to church. That evening, we went to another church that had Sunday evening services, because this was



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one of “those kind” of churches. I don’t remember what the preacher said, but I was drawn to it and my uncle noticed something was happening.

Most people in this church came to the altar at the conclusion of the service. They knelt at the altar and prayed. I followed them to the altar, and I prayed. I don’t know what happened, but I started to cry and I didn’t stop for a long time. My uncle, who made the trip to that church with us, saw what was happening and he proceeded to come alongside me. I learned enough on this short trip to know I was doing the right thing, even though I wasn’t really a churchgoer. That evening, I became a follower of Jesus. My walk forward that night at the end of the service was where my conversion was sealed. I meant business. I didn’t know very much about what it meant to be a Christian.

We all respected our grandmother, and I knew that she was at home praying for me and this was a sincere conversion on my part. And so I began to grow in my faith. I fortunately followed the right role models, anywhere I found them. A year or two later, after graduating from high school, my mom didn’t think I could make it in college or otherwise. She actually didn’t want to stay home alone. My brother was there until January when he got married. His marriage worked and he became a Christian a few years later. My brother and I actually became good friends once we were adults. (We fought like cats and dogs while growing up.) We became even closer friends after we were both following the Lord.

Since my conversion, I’ve committed my life to full-time ministry. I’ve enjoyed my time as a youth pastor, senior pastor, doing urban Christian work, and most recently, I’ve been privileged to serve with Poland Evangelical Mission. Now in my senior years, I face retirement. I’m giving up some of my responsibilities to others who have served alongside me at PEM.



Russ & Doris (along with two grandsons) with an Ukrainian family at Camp Eden in Oćwieka, PL.

Please pray for Poland often!

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