

October 29, 2016: Report from Poland CCA
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Back in Lodz, where Hanna's Parents were held in the Ghetto

July 19 - 24, 2016

The Story begins in Rome

The story of our journey to Poland begins in Rome. In the fall of 2015, George and I were standing with a 100 or so friends, including Ryan and Noleen, Ludwig and Cecily, in the portico of St John Lateran, the oldest church in Rome.

We were part of the Wittenberg 2017 gathering. Closely packed in concentric circles, Protestants streams formed the outer ring, they surrounded Roman Catholics and at the core was a small group of Messianic Jews. We symbolized layers of church history and just as we began to pray in repentance for our divisions.....

Christl from Germany suddenly moved from her place in the outer circle, she came to the center and joined arms with the 7 of us who were Messianic Jews. It was the first time that Christl had ever publicly acknowledged her Jewish roots.

A few weeks later Christl was eating breakfast, seated next to Gerold Jäger, at a German Christian leaders gathering and as they talked she shared with him her experience in Rome mentioning *Meine Krone in der Asche* (the German version of *A Garland for Ashes*).

Gerold Jäger is a young priest working with University students in Bonn. He is part of Chemin Neuf, an international ministry focused on renewal and unity among young adults in Europe and beyond.

When he read *Meine Krone in der Asche*, and discovered that my parents had suffered in the Lodz ghetto, he sent us an email with an invitation to a Youth Festival, *Restored by Love*, to be held in Lodz, at the end of July, asking us to share about forgiveness and reconciliation.

Almost immediately we knew this was from the Lord! And we are so thankful for many of you who prayed with us through the challenging process of extending our stay in Europe by a month.

My parents were deported from Köln (Cologne), Germany to the Lodz ghetto on 30 October 1941. They endured life in the ghetto for 6 months. On May 3rd 1941 they were gassed in Chelmno, a tiny village, 75 KM from Lodz.

To be invited to testify to 5,000 young people from 40 nations in the city of Lodz, to publicly honor my parents in the city of their shame....that was something that only God could arrange.

'Restored by Love' is the name given by Chemin Neuf, in their call for young people to be in Lodz for 6 days in July. They wrote, " Through this event we dream of seeing a generation passionate about Jesus, ready to rise with conviction to make a difference to the world".

Radegast Station

Today Radegast Railway Station at the edge of the city of Lodz is a memorial place.

On the actual platform where my parents among hundreds of other frightened Jews stepped out of train carriages on to hard concrete, there I could share their story with young people from many countries, and read from my book.

We were all aware of the presence of the Lord, the young people as they engaged with the painful history enacted in that place and for me as I revisited my loss and experienced a deeper healing in the sharing.

It was from this platform that my parents Amalie and Markus Zack left for their final journey from Lodz to Chelmno.

There were unforgettable personal encounters with young people from places like Egypt, Lebanon, Malaysia. Chun Lu a student from Taiwan, tore a page from her personal journal, and gave it to me there on the platform.

She had written, "You remind us, love and forgive is important. And love from Jesus our Lord is powerful".

Testimony in Paradise Hala

Gradually we were being drawn into the heart of the days in Lodz. On Thursday evening 5,000 worshipping, praying young people led by a group carrying a large horizontal wooden cross, walked through the city, stopping at places like the building where Maxillian Kolbe had planted a community. Maximillian Kolbe, a priest was martyred in Auschwitz, when he took the place of a Jewish family man who had been selected for death by starvation.

Before the prayer walk we all came together in the 'Paradise Hala' for worship and testimonies. Only the Holy Spirit could have arranged for the public sharing of my parents' story, the honoring of their names in Lodz the place where they suffered degradation and contempt, unseen and unknown.

To end my testimony I prayed the words of the Aaronic blessing:

"The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift His face on you and give you peace".

When God called Abraham, he intended Abraham and his descendants to be a blessing to the nations and for me as a Jew to bless those young people from so many countries was a treasured gift from my Heavenly Father.

Chelmno

In the Spring of 2010 George and I visited Lodz and Chelmno for the first time. Eight friends travelled with us, Verena and Hans Peter Lang, from Austria, David and Greetje Saunders from Britain and Holland, Julia Stone from Britain, Jutta Diegel from Germany, Ryan Thurman and Megan Comstock from Phoenix. We reached Chelmno on May 3, 2010. A tiny, little known village where my parents were forced into a truck and gassed with other closely packed Jews as they were being driven to the forest. May 3rd was the Anniversary of their death but it was also the Polish National Day and we found the entrance gate locked, we could not enter, we could only kneel in the dirt at the gate and pray.

Almost immediately after receiving this year's invitation to Lodz, the thought came...."Could we return to Chelmno and this time pray at the actual place where my parents entered the gas truck?"

Chelmno is far from Lodz and the program is already full.....

Sunday morning on our last day in Poland a group gathered in the lobby of the Ibis Hotel in Lodz.

Together we bowed our heads before we set off for Chelmno!

We drove through the open gate and the young, Polish curator came to welcome us, joined by a film crew from Chemin Neuf.

Since our first visit, Polish archaeologists have removed the concrete that covered the foundations of a large building and the pathway to the waiting truck.

We all stood close together, facing the death walk, the German brothers and sisters with Julia and I, both Messianic Jews. We prayed in Jesus' Name.

Three young women from Belgium and Holland sang in Hebrew,

And the film crew captured a miracle.

Restored by Love film: <http://netforgod.tv/en/home/films/5804f8582456407d078b9c59/restored-by-love>