



BAPTIST COURIERS FOR CHRIST

EST 1979

March 2025

Strive Together with Us

As you read this, by God's grace, we will be in Dominican Republic with a team of 19 Americans (March 3-11). It is our plan to assist pastor Carlos Mora and wife Sara with their church-planting efforts on the Samana Peninsula. They have a heart to reach the young people of their country with the gospel of Jesus Christ. We have a youth conference planned for three nights, a basketball camp on Saturday, and a friend Sunday on March 9. All of these venues will have a time of singing, biblical stories, and evangelization through the preaching of the word. We will also have the opportunity to minister in some of the local schools. Our best efforts are woefully inadequate without the power and work of the Holy Spirit. Please pray for safety and health for the team members, tender and open hearts to the gospel, good weather, and a good turnout for the meetings. Romans 15:30, **Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me....** For those of you on Facebook, please follow our page "Baptist Couriers for Christ." We will have live and daily updates throughout the mission trip.



◀ The Dominican flag is the only one on earth that has an open Bible as part of its coat of arms. The indicated verse is John 8:32, **...and the truth shall make you free.**



Clockwise from top left:
Some of the young people
at the Moras' church

Josh preaching as Pastor Carlos interprets
Pastor Carlos and wife Sara with Josh and Kelli

The Samana Peninsula is a beautiful part
of the world but still needs the light
of the gospel.



HISTORY Highlight

A Harrowing Experience

by Donald Stertz



Siberian Seven: Doug and Diane Kossel, Ken and Tricia Stertz, Wynette Thompson, Don and Laura Stertz

It was spring of 1984, and seven of us from Wyldewood Baptist Church (in Oshkosh, Wisconsin) were planning a necessary trip into Eastern Europe. The group was composed of Ken and Tricia Stertz, Doug and Diane Kossel, Laura and me, and Wynette Thompson. Doug was our church treasurer at the time and also dean of Wyldewood's School of the Scriptures institute. Wynette had always had a great interest in Eastern Europe and desired firsthand experience there during the Cold War.

This mission trip was Ken, Tricia, and Wynette's first time to travel behind the Iron Curtain into the communist countries. As time would eventually tell, it made a great impact upon their lives. Plans for this mission trip were finalized, and we were on our way. Someone dubbed us The Siberian Seven, which was a title that stuck throughout the decades since.

We successfully traveled through several Eastern Bloc countries and were now approaching the border of Poland. Border crossings were always a very tense time. The guards' questions were almost always the same, "Where are you going? Are you visiting anyone? Who? Where?" They also frequently searched our luggage and thoroughly inspected our vehicle. The Polish guards had taken our passports, checked under the van seats, and cleared the inside. Finally one guard that spoke English told us to open the back door. As I opened the door the guard exclaimed,

"So MUCH luggage!" I simply replied, "We have lots of women!" The guard burst out laughing and told me to close the door.

About an hour later we finally cleared the border and were on our way to Katowice, where we would meet with our contact. The plan was to deliver some items and then gather information from Pastor Czeslaw Bassara. I remember that as we were privileged to eat at various church members' homes, we were fed a lot of ham. I turned to Pastor Bassara and mentioned that there must be a lot of ham available in Poland. His eyes opened wide in surprise and he said, "That is not true! Polish families receive special coupons twice per year, one at Christmas and the second during Easter. It allows the purchase of a pound of ham per coupon." What he told me next was very humbling. He stated, "Our members knew that some American Christians were coming, so they willingly gave their coupons to me so enough ham could be purchased to feed our American guests." What gracious, selfless, hospitable people!

Another time word got out that some American believers were coming to Poland and would be visiting Pastor Bassara's church. For that Sunday morning service, one young lady traveled by train and bus, and then walked the last kilometer to get to the church. All told, it took her a little over two hours to arrive, just so that she could meet the American Christians! Again, we were exceedingly humbled.

When we were in the pastor's home, he began to share



Wynette taking a photo as we are loading the van



Left: Home Bible study

Right: Doug speaking at the church with Pastor Bassara interpreting



with us the tremendous need that there was in Poland for gospel literature. Pastor Bassara was a very gracious, kind, and humble man, and he was reluctant to ask anything of us. After a wonderful time of fellowship, he told our group that he had written a tract. Furthermore, he stated that he had no way of getting the tract typeset or printed because the communist regime controlled all infrastructure of the country.

We were thinking that it was a tract—one sheet of paper. We could smuggle it out, then get it typeset, printed in a large quantity, and smuggled back into Poland through our specially built vehicles driven by code-named Bible couriers. We were all surprised when he brought out 20 full-sized pages, hand written on both sides! Basically it was a small booklet! The seven of us had already committed to the project, but we now looked at each other skeptically.

We were thinking, “Who’s going to risk carrying this out through the Polish border and how?” Pastor Bassara handed me the papers with a grateful look on his face.

Our group later discussed these 20 pages of what the communists would call contraband and how to get it safely through the border patrol. One of my



The young lady circled above travelled two hours to get to the service.

colleagues spoke up and said, “Well, Don, it’s your ministry!” This definitely implied that it was my responsibility to accomplish this scary task. (NOTE: At this time Ken and Tricia had not yet joined the Couriers for Christ ministry.) Someone (possibly Tricia) suggested that we could place the 20 pages into Laura’s carpetbag-type purse. It was rather large, and I believed that it might work. Rarely had we seen the border guards look into our ladies’ purses. The decision was made, and Laura reluctantly agreed to it.

I carefully laid the bulky group of pages on the bottom of the empty purse, and Laura placed all of the remainder

of the items she carried on top of them. Asking the Lord’s protection, we started driving to the border. The closer we got, the more tension we experienced. We pulled our van into the line of vehicles that were already in the process of making the crossing. A guard came over and told us to pull our vehicle to the side as another guard collected our passports. We were told to get out of the van and get into the line of people who were ahead of us. As we got closer to where the guards were questioning each person, we saw something that made our hearts race. The guards were making each lady in the line dump the contents of her purse out on a steel table so that they could inspect them! One can only imagine what Laura was experiencing in that very instant! She asked to use the toilet, as her stomach was revolting against the intense fear that was gripping her. While in there, she prayed and begged God to intervene!

With only a few people in line ahead of us, we were very close to the inspection table!

Providentially, a female guard came up to us and said, “Come with me,” after she discovered that we were Americans. We walked around the table with purses upside down and their contents removed, to a different area where we were given our passports and told to wait. Very shortly thereafter, we were directed to get into our van and leave the border. We were praising and thanking the Lord for His wonderful grace and protection! None of us was more thankful than Laura, who was spared being detained, questioned, and perhaps jailed for taking contraband through the communist border. We were reminded of the Bible verse, **Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.** - Isaiah 41:10 -



Pastor Bassara with letters requesting Bibles and Christian literature

An Opportunity **FOR YOU...**



*Nathan Ring with two new converts
following their scriptural baptism*

We are currently planning our first campaign to the country of Brazil. People are signing up, and we are looking forward to see how God will use the team that He puts together to assist Nathan and Sarah Ring in their church planting efforts. They have ministered faithfully for over a decade in Porto Alegre, and the Lord has blessed their faithfulness with a precious church filled with Brazilians that love the Lord and are growing in Him. God has burdened them for a region that was affected by severe flooding this past May. Many lost souls there are seeking for answers in the wake of the devastation. You can be part of sharing the hope of the gospel with them and the peace that only Jesus Christ brings in the midst of the storms of life. The cost is \$2950, and the trip will be held October 27-November 11, 2025. Please visit coursiersforchrist.com and click on the mission trips tab for more information. Don't hesitate to reach out to Josh Stertz (920) 420-8215 or josh.stertz@wyldewood.org for details.

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Please scan the code at left
to visit our ministry web pages
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A ministry of  *Wyldeewood Baptist Church*