

Baptist Union of Hungary

Hungary has enjoyed political freedom since 1989 and became a member of the European Union in 2004. According to the latest census, about 17,000 of its citizens (total population is about 10 mln) are related in some way to the Baptist Union. About two thirds of the population confesses allegiance to a church, but only about 10% practice their faith. There are ethnic minorities including the Roma people (Gypsy), Ruthenians, Germans, Jews, Romanians, Slovaks etc.

The Baptist faith came to Hungary thanks to Johann Gerhard Oncken who influenced Janos Rottmayer while in Hamburg. Rottmayer and his mission team were sent back with the purpose of spreading the gospel. They arrived in Hungary on May 20, 1846 which became a milestone in the history of the newly founded Hungarian Baptist Mission.

The work of HBM was most successful in eastern Hungary and Transylvania among the peasants. By the end of the century the number of Baptists rose to 5,000, and after the First World War increased to 25,000.

In 1906 the Baptist Theological Seminary in Budapest was founded. Since then, the Seminary has released hundreds of pastors into the missionary field with the purpose of „giving true faithful, devout, humble and intellectually prepared pastors...” In 1914, the Baptist Orphanage was built which functioned for forty years, providing a temporary home for many children from all denominations. In the 1920's the missionary work was blooming and the number of Baptists in the country doubled.

After the Second World War there were about 15,000 Baptists in Hungary. The communist ideology had a negative effect on churches, and so did the urbanization, which resulted in the loss of many rural churches.



Dr. K.Meszaros (left) & J.Papp (right)

Mission work among the Roma people

Dr. Kalman Meszaros, the president of the BU states: *“the Baptist leaders of Hungary would like to start more churches among the Gypsies since they are the fastest growing segment of the society. Presently there are 12 Gypsy churches that are part of the BU.”*

Janos Papp, the mission director of the BU says: *“the Gypsy work has been supported by the BU of Hungary for about 5 years. The Gypsies in Hungary comprise about 8% of the population (total of 800,000) and are concentrated particularly in the north and the east of the country. They are generally open to the gospel and every month a new preaching point is set up (usually in homes). Some home churches have continued for several years and they need buildings.”*

Some of the Roma church planters are supported by EBF and its partners through IMP.

Gypsy Church planting

A Baptist church has been planted among the Roma people in the village of Csobanka by the missionary Joseph several years ago. A few months ago the church planter moved with his family to another location in Hungary about 300 km away. He is currently involved in the planting of a new church.



Gypsy churches are packed with people. They sing joyfully and play numerous instruments during their services. Several testimonies are usually shared between the songs.

The Roma people value greatly an extended family and numerous kinships. Their society is organized in clans. Gypsies are very musical and this is helpful in evangelism. Hospitality is very important for them, and their houses are decorated with colorful flowers, pictures etc.



Ignac, being basically an evangelist, visits several church plants in the area within a radius of about 70 km from his village. The first contact is usually initiated by some Christian relatives. A church plant begins from a small group that would meet in a home even a couple of times a week. When a core group is established an organized outreach in the open air is possible.

A group usually grows and after some time a partition wall between two rooms must be removed to provide additional space. Then a growing group would look for a public facility. The final stage is getting a church building. Only a few Roma churches in Hungary have their own facilities.

Baptisms are performed in the open air. The largest one took place in May 2004 when over 50 people were baptized and many outsiders watched the ceremony. The

candidates and church members walked in a long procession for about 15 km which was very powerful testimony.

The most obvious obstacles to the ministry would be: poverty, unemployment, mobility, superstitions. When a wife of one Christian died rumors went out that other wives will die too. Men develop very close relationships, which may be an obstacle to young converts who struggle to get rid of some old habits. Children usually go to schools and illiteracy is not a problem amongst the younger generation. The older ones, however, often start their education by reading the Bible. Roma people change dramatically after conversion to Christianity – violent crimes drop in number, children start attending school etc. This is again a very good testimony to the other people.

Prayer requests

1. Please, pray for new leaders in the new Gypsy congregations!
2. Please, pray for the unity and for good contact between the Roma and Hungarian people and churches!
3. Please, pray for new church buildings for the new growing Gypsy churches!

Daniel Trusiewicz
EBF Mission Coordinator

To help planting reproducing churches!

To help growing healthy churches!

For the glory of God!

www.ebf.org/imp

Offerings and donations should be sent to:

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