

Emerging churches

The EBF indigenous mission project (IMP) was launched in April 2002 in Moldova. The project is the response of the EBF to the needs of nations which are open to the Gospel. The number of IMP projects has grown steadily since 2002. At the end of 2007, IMP supported over 65 indigenous church planters ministering in 25 different nations.

The IMP church planters work in countries of Eastern Europe, the Baltic Nations, the Caucasus & Central Asia that are economically weak, but receptive to the gospel of Jesus. The project partners with Baptist Unions in their mission work and in witnessing for Christ amongst Arabic-speaking peoples of the Middle East and Iraq. A couple of IMP missionaries are supported for their work in Central Europe – particularly among the Roma people.

Twenty of the first church planters finished their five-year program in December 2007. They were asked to provide an evaluation of their ministry. Their report contains some interesting information and significant conclusions. The most important feature is that a number of churches have emerged over the past 5 years and many hundreds of new members have found their spiritual home. Additionally, thousands of people have been exposed to the Gospel message, which would not have been otherwise possible. All the newly-planted churches are showing healthy signs of growth and maturity.

However the majority of the 20 indigenous church planters reported that the newly planted churches have not reached self-sufficiency after 5 years. All of church planters are deeply appreciative to EBF and the Mission Partners for their ongoing support during their ministry.

Here are some excerpts from the evaluation report:

1. Armenia

The goal which was set before the IMP church planters was that they would plant indigenous congregations in Armenia. They believe that they have been successful: after 5 years the newly-planted churches in Armenia have become part of wider society.



The church planter **Galust** says: *“In Ijevan, for example, there was no church here before. After 5 years there is a congregation of 25 baptized believers who witness for Christ. Each Sunday 40-50 people attend the newly-planted, growing church! Besides Sunday worship there are activities during the week: three Bible study groups for adults, youth meetings and Sunday school for children”.*

2. Belarus

In partnership with EBF over the past 5 years, **Sergey** & his wife Nadejda successfully planted a church called “Resurrection” in the town of Dzerginsk. Five years ago there was no Christian witness in this town at all. At present there are 14 members, including four Bible

study groups. About 30 people attend Sunday services and the church has use of a hall where they can meet.

Sergey has been able to continue his studies at Minsk Theological Seminary for "Teaching the Bible Today" - a program that prepares teachers to lead Bible study groups. The aim is to train others in this ministry & begin a local program for preachers. Sergey states: *"I'm grateful & express thankfulness for the support provided personally to my family. It had a great effect on the improvement of public services, evangelistic meetings, summer camps for children, and development of the Sunday school.*



The fellowship has grown up from a missionary point to a church. Praise God!"

3. Jordan

The church planter started his ministry four years ago with only 12 members. Now there are 60 adult members and 24 children who attend on Sunday. The church has also trained 9 church planters who are doing similar ministry in three other towns of Jordan. They have started more than 15 house groups.

He concludes in his report: *"I'm thankful for the help provided for part of my needs. IMP support helped me a lot but I want to point out that church planting is much more than a missionary salary; it is a full program of evangelism, discipleship and training leaders; all these things need to be supported as well."*

4. Moldova

The church planter **Igor** states: *"Right now we have a congregation of 33 members and 10 friends attending regularly. When I entered the IMP program, our fellowship only had a few people but it has grown well over the last 5 years. Unfortunately almost 20 of our church members emigrated from Moldova looking for employment. This is a serious problem that many churches in my country are facing. Over the last five years we have also started two congregations in the villages of Speia and Roscani"*.



The mother church of Anenii-Noi meets three times a week and the groups in the villages meet twice a week. There are 5 preachers in the church, a music leader and the church also supports two other missionaries. The church of Anenii-Noi is in the process of building a mission center which would prepare many other church planters for work in Moldova. The school for church planters will be launched at the beginning of 2009.

Igor added: *"I, with my family want to thank IMP for the support that has been provided over the last 5 years of partnership. This was indeed a tremendous help in enabling me to do God's work. I also wish to thank the mission teams from Virginia who came to help us with the construction, children's activities and evangelistic work"*.

5. Lebanon

The church planter writes: *"Two and a half years ago when we launched our ministry the vision was to start many house groups. Now there are three permanent services in three different houses. We discovered that people need times of worship, discipleship, preaching and fellowship together. We have reached our goal of having three growing groups in different locations. I wish to take this opportunity to thank you for supporting me for the last 3 years, which came at the exact time that I needed it most"*.

There are 31 members in total (adults and children from 12 families). At almost every meeting new people are present. Three groups meet for Bible study during the week. 7 people have been baptized over the last 2,5 years. In addition 7 young men (18-32 years old) have confessed their Christian faith.

6. Russia

The church planter **Taras** reports: *"Between 2003 and 2007 the new church in Novy Urengoy of Yamal has been through various different stages. The group initially consisted of 8 people and today there are 37 members and 5 groups in the church. On Sundays there are nearly 80-90 regular visitors. Altogether 53 people were baptized over the past 5 years. The average age of people living on the far north is 25-40. Typically, most people move from the far north to central Russia after 10-15 years of living here"*.

There are 4 preachers in the church who are part of the program "Project-250" - an institute of young preachers and leaders. Often other new leaders emerge & work with established leaders. Church members are involved in organizing activities for during the week: some are responsible for equipment; decoration of the meeting hall; evangelizing meetings, etc. The church meets for worship on Sundays; prayer services on Tuesdays; youth meetings on Wednesdays and Bible study on Thursdays. A fundamental problem is that the church does not have a building of their own, so they have to rent premises in different places.



7. Ukraine

The church planter **Vladimir** opens his report saying: *"The newly-planted «Grace» Baptist Church has seen a good deal of growth over the last 5 years. We have 120 members now, and attendance on Sundays is about 200. We have to conduct our services over two meetings because the meeting hall is too small to accommodate everyone. Statistics from the Kiev area Baptist Association show that our congregation has been the fastest growing church in 2007 and we hope for the same in 2008. 12 people will be baptized in February 2008. Our greatest success has been the development of small groups, which we have 10 of now. Our most effective method of evangelism is through personal contact with people"*.

The leaders of "Grace Church" also go to schools in their district to introduce biblical principles of morality on issues of drug addiction, alcohol, sexuality and AIDS. They recently held a «Day of Battle with AIDS» at a school where they talked about Jesus. One school leader even accepted Jesus as his Saviour. The church carries on serving among drug addicts and their families. The church recently purchased a house to convert into a rehabilitation center which is 40 km from Kiev & can accommodate about 20 people. The church believes that this project will help to improve their ministry of serving and reaching out to people.



Vladimir concludes: *"I'm particularly grateful for ongoing support. 5 years ago we started with one small group and you trusted that the Lord would multiply us, and it has happened! Praise God!"*

The church planter **Arkady** writes: *"Thank you for supporting our ministry to Romanian minority communities in Ukraine over the last 5 years. Each year we have been able to open new mission points in districts of Ukraine with Romanian populations, including*

Chernivtsi, Transcarpatia and Odessa. In all these things I see God's powerful hand at work as new doors are opening for the preaching of the Gospel and church planting. I ask you to pray and help us to extend the Kingdom of God among Romanian minority communities in Ukraine"

Since opening 3 years ago, the work and ministry at the mission point in Transcarpatia district has been growing and developing. Additionally, 5 people were baptized and the fellowship is also growing. Last year a new church started in the village of Biserica Alba, which has a population of 10,000 people and only two in the village are Christians. In Odessa district the churches from Chernivtsi supported a missionary couple for four years. In addition to that in 2007 the church started supporting two local missionaries in an area where are no Christians. In Chernivtsi district mission points were started in four different villages.

Let's pray that new planted churches will continue growing and witnessing for Christ.

In Christ,

Daniel Trusiewicz
EBF Mission Coordinator

To help planting reproducing churches!

To help growing healthy churches!

For the glory of God!