



## Indigenous Mission Project Newsletter – January 2009

It takes at least 15 years of hard mission work until a self-supporting church is established, so the mission work in Lithuania is still in its initial stages of development...

### Baptist roots in Lithuania

In October 1841, German Baptist missionary - Johann Gerhard Oncken baptised 25 men and women, and this is the date which the first Baptist church in Lithuania takes as its founding. These baptisms were performed in the river Danė, outside the city of Memel, now called Klaipėda.



Soon after those first baptisms, Baptist missionary work among ethnic Lithuanians resulted in the establishment of 6 other churches and by 1875 the Memel Baptist Church had started 27 mission stations, with a total membership of 2200.

During the Second World War most of the Baptist communities almost disappeared. However in the post-war decades, missionary work was slowly re-established.

### Mission work at present

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, several indigenous missionaries began a church-planting ministry. They focused on several missionary stations. Mission work in their circumstances involves a great deal of commitment and effort.

The General Secretary of the Baptist Union – Linas Andronovas, reckons that it takes at least 15 years of hard mission work until a self supporting church is established. Bearing this in mind, the mission work in Lithuania is still in its initial stages of development.



Today there are eight churches belonging to the Baptist Union of Lithuania, with a total membership of 385 baptized believers. There are also several mission stations in different parts of the country.

Lithuania is an independent state in the Baltic region and a member of the EU since 2004. The country's population is 3,6 million, with 80% professing Roman Catholics, 10% Orthodox, and 1% Protestant.

### **Church plants in Lithuania supported by EBF**

The EBF has supported two church planters in Lithuania. The church planters work with small groups with the hope that in the future these will develop into self-supporting churches. One of the church planters is Nikolaiy, who is planting a new Baptist congregation in Rokiškis, East Lithuania. Here are some excerpts from his mission reports:

#### **Rokiskis mission station – East Lithuania**

##### **2005**

*Rokiškis is a small town of about 19.000 inhabitants in the eastern part of Lithuania near the Latvian border. Currently there are 6 baptized members. There is also a Sunday school which currently has 12 children between the ages of 5-15 years old attending. Our church meets in a rented building where we also run a small library as well as a children's theatre. The group has a good relationship with the Daugavpils Baptists in Latvia, and we try to organize church visits as time and finances permit.*



*On Saturdays we have a youth and children's group, which enjoys activities like singing, reading the Bible and spending time together. On Sundays we usually have between 6 to 20 people attending our services. Many of these are parents of the kids who come to the youth group on Saturday evenings.*

*In April this year the Rokiškis mission group attended an annual Song Festival. The festival was organized by the Baptist Union to help form deeper relationships between churches and to develop musical ministries in the churches. This year the Union also organized for a minister to visit the Rokiskis mission station about once a month.*

## **2006**

*In February this year we had a visit from Visaginas Baptist Church. They came to help us run an evangelistic outreach in our town. Rokiškis was the first town on this evangelistic tour, which was organized for the whole of eastern Lithuania. Everyone from our mission group was invited to contribute in some way: with singing, poetry and prayers. Our mission group was very encouraged by this event and their help. Such visits help to strengthen our ministry of witnessing for Christ in a predominantly Catholic environment.*

*We bought a number of books and distributed them to the children of the Sunday school, to our neighbors, and to local school. Despite our concern that the library would not accept the books, the library did accept them and made them available to many people.*

*There are not yet many believers in our town and the work of making the Gospel known is not easy but the Lord blessed us with an opportunity for great joy: In August our congregation celebrated the baptism of one lady, which was performed in a local lake. We sang, prayed and worshipped in the open air. We also had guests joining us from other congregations who shared this joy with us! There were also several visitors who were not believers. Some of our members invited them to witness the baptism. The family members of some of our members came for the first time ever and we hope they will attend more regularly in the future.*



## **2007**

*Six new children started attending our Sunday school. The children always look forward to their interesting meetings with Tania, the Sunday school teacher. Some of these children have older siblings who participate in a similar group for teenagers. Even the mothers of some of these kids come regularly to worship with us on Sundays.*

*In July, 5 members of our youth group participated in a Christian camp. The camp took place in a very beautiful area, situated between two lakes. It was a very busy and meaningful week. We had Bible studies in the mornings, played games, and enjoyed evening meetings by the fireplace etc. Once the camp was over, all the participants commented on how much they had enjoyed the week. We were happy that the camp had been so successful, although many people traveled some distance to participate and I had to take them home in my little car! The first Sunday after the camp three girls from our church repented and asked the Lord to come into their hearts! This was a very exciting and encouraging event for our missionary group, which is now growing slowly but steadily.*

## **2008**

*The year 2008 began with many members getting ill and so this was a time of prayer for healing and testing of our faith. Later that year our car broke down, which was a great loss as it was the only means of transport for us to maintain contact with other churches.*



*Our congregation celebrated Easter by gathering everyone from the church together, sharing food, singing songs and enjoying fellowship. On the 25 December we celebrated Christmas in our church. We had a service together with our children who actively participated. The parents of the children were invited to attend and many came to our church for the first time. The children sang and recited poems. We all worshipped God by singing hymns and later on in the service we also distributed gifts to the children.*

### **Prayer requests**

1. Pray that the mission group will be particularly successful among the Lithuanian speaking people (there are also Russian speaking ethnic groupings).
2. That the mission group would see good results from their missionary efforts among the Rokiškis community.
3. For the strength to overcome all the obstacles, and for persistence to continue the work which has been started.

*Daniel Trusiewicz*  
EBF Mission Coordinator

To help planting reproducing churches!

To help growing healthy churches!

For the glory of God!

For more information about EBF projects and activities visit the web page - [www.ebf.org](http://www.ebf.org) and you can write to IMP coordinator – [imp@ebf.org](mailto:imp@ebf.org)