



Indigenous Mission Project Newsletter – July 2010

God's mission is progressing in the economically deprived but spiritually potential nations of Caucasus. Baptists of Armenia are obviously leading in the indigenous missionary efforts of the region. The great advantage is freedom that the Armenian people have enjoyed since 1991.

Baptists in Armenia



Armenia is famous for being the world oldest Christian nation – since 301 AD. The majority of population (about 3 mln) belongs to the Armenian Apostolic Church. The first Baptist congregations were established in Armenia in the beginning of the 18th century.

In the early 20th century a series of painful events struck a severe blow to Christian believers. The national genocide along with the Soviet communist regime attempted to destroy Christian faith of the Armenian people.

The atheist system had collapsed in 1991 and a great number of people have turned to the living faith in God. The particularly spectacular growth was registered in the 90s of 20th century.

In 1990 there were only 4 local Baptist churches with total membership of 350. Five years later this number had doubled. In 1998 there were 1100 Baptists and in 2002 the statistics registered about 2500 members in nearly 100 churches and church plants. The data for 2006 showed: 3800 members in 137 congregations. Today (2010) there are 4700 Baptist members in 150 local congregations.

Armenian Baptists are very active in the mission work. One missionary supported by EBF, wrote in his report: *“every time when I visit our people I see that they express great interest in God; they ask many questions about faith, gladly listen to the good news about Christ and some want to join our church. We are very happy because God answers our prayers. We pray for more New Testaments and Bibles for children in our language, musical instruments and transportation.”*

Asatur Nahapetyan, the general secretary of Baptist Union of Armenia says: *“The BU runs a theological Seminary in Yerevan - since 1998 over 70 students have graduated and are involved in ministry. The BU organized successful children’s ministry - each summer several camps and Vacation Bible Schools draw thousands. There is also a special program of charity work among orphans.”*

Among the indigenous missionaries

Asatur and I visited several indigenous church planters. **Aram** works in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia. The services and Bible studies are organized everyday at 8 pm in a private flat. On the night of our visit about 20 were present. Aram ministers to about a 100 people. The group prays about a building for its mtgs. Asatur thinks that a separate place of worship would enhance the work significantly.

The next place of our visit is the town of Charenstavan, 50 km from Yerevan where **Suren** works. The congregation meets 3 times a week and there are 17 members. About 30 are present in a midweek prayer service. The group started in 2005. There was a crisis in the beginning but the group has been growing since. Asatur says that Suren is one of the most successful missionaries in the union. The new planted congregation meets in a rented building which can seat at least 50 and on Sundays the hall is full.



The travel to Stepanakert, capital of Nagorny Karabakh is particularly exciting and interesting. The road is winding among the mountains and the drivers are slaloming between the numerous wholes. Often I can see an abyss just next to the car which is deep to 200-300 meters down without hardly any protection. The roads are above 2 thousand meters above the sea level. The cars often have to stop in order to give way to herds of cows or sheep.



We arrive during the service. **Ashot** is the church planter and he started this church while he was in the army. The church has developed well and also called a pastor. There are about 30 people in the church. The group meets in a hall which can seat a double number. They sing with a lot of zeal as the pastor plays piano. Some children recite poems. The church meets in a building that belongs to the union. This is the sole evangelical congregation in Karabakh.

The next destination is Goris where we meet with **Arsen**. He lives near the town center in a rented building. He and his wife Larisa moved there 2 years ago. They have been able to befriend at least 15 families who meet with them for Bible studies. Some of them are also involved in the Emmaus course. They are waiting for the first baptism. The missionary also organizes shows of Christian films: 'Jesus' and 'Passion of Christ'. Arsen plans to organize a day camp (Vacation Bible school) for children during the summer and would like to start some social work, like soup kitchen or similar.

The church planting is the strong aspect of Baptist union's work in Armenia. It is due to the great deal of freedom in this country and the missionary spirit of Baptist leaders. The missionaries are well motivated and guided – thus they achieve their goals successfully.



Daniel Trusiewicz
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To help planting reproducing churches!

To help growing healthy churches!

For the glory of God!