

Mission despite obstacles

Baptists in Turkey

Turkey may be called the cradle of Christianity. Some missionary journeys of the apostle Paul took place in today's Turkey, and the seven churches (Rev. 2-3) were located there too. Nowadays over 80% of nearly 70 million Turkish citizens claim to be Muslims and all the Christians counted together comprise less than 1%...



There are 8 associated Baptist congregations in Turkey which together form an alliance. The main goal of this still young network is to cooperate and encourage each other for witness as well as overcome the obstacles. Their chairman is Ertan Cevik, pastor from Izmir (ancient Smyrna) and pastor Orhan Picaklar from Samsun (on the Black Sea coast) plays an important role in this cooperation.

Story of Pastor Orhan

Several years ago Orhan found an advert for a free New Testament. He had requested one and some-time later the post brought a copy of the Gospel of John. He was very impressed while reading it but did not know anybody in his city to talk about the issues he had just read.

Later a change of jobs moved Orhan to another Turkish city and he continued reading the New Testament. One day a colleague at work shared about his Christian faith and they began studying the Bible together. Soon one other believer joined in, and later he invited them all to a Christian church.

After a few years Orhan had been called to the Black Sea coast and start a new church there, so together with his family moved to Samsun (city populated by about 500 thousand). Soon he started sharing the gospel and found many receptive people and the new believers asked him to be their pastor.

Ever since Orhan and his family have been in Samsun they experienced numerous attacks on them. Letters and emails with threats as well as aggressive phone calls have been regular offences against them. A sheer sign of a cross or another Christian symbol could instigate outrageous anger of the extremists who would viciously insult the attenders, brake windows in a Christian building etc. Several years

ago Orhan got kidnapped by a group of extremists who held him in a custody wanting to stop the Christian activity, however without any success...

Agape Church

This was the beginning of the Agape Church in Samsun. The group opened a website and discovered that there were thousands of entries which was really effective method in reaching out to local people. Numerous people visited this newly opened church and wanted to ask questions about the Christian faith. Besides the website visitors are also drawn through personal contacts.



The congregation in Samsun is like a large family. There is a great deal of devotion and strong spiritual bond that connects the believers. They meet several times during the week, not just for a worship service. They organize regular open door baptisms, usually in a pool or in the Black Sea.

No public Christian events are allowed except for some activities in prisons. And, yes - they do have many requests from prisoners who ask for visits. Recently many refugees from Syria, Iran and Afghanistan have arrived in Turkey and the Agape Church takes care of some of them by way of distributing food, blankets, coal etc.



The Agape Church - after many years of trying - has finally received a permission to build its own sanctuary that will serve their growing ministry and an opening of this new building is planned for December 10, 2017.

Agape is the only evangelical church within a radius of six hours drive in any direction. They continue the work of discipling believers who are scattered throughout this vast area as their goal is to establish more churches. The region includes 16 towns and is inhabited by more than 7 million people.

Pastor Orhan often says: *"In our country every Christian is a missionary who should be ready to suffer for faith."*

Church Planting in Ordu

The Agape Church is currently planting a new congregation in the coastal city of Ordu, 130 km away from Samsun where many people are ready for the gospel. They meet regularly for a Bible study and worship, and the majority are Iranian refugees. An assistant of pastor Orhan from Ordu is being trained to lead this new planted congregation and this is what he wrote in the recent report:



"We had about 20-25 people attending the services before last Christmas but earlier this year many Iranian refugees arrived and some of them joined our group. We started hosting over 70 people in our 30 square meter room, so now there are two services one after another, and 2 midweek Bible studies as well as other meetings in Turkish, Farsi and English.

Yes, we feel overwhelmed with the Iranians but also several Turks visit us. Often the Iranians bring to church their Turkish friends. There are many people who come and ask questions. Our congregation has grown to 150 people of different nationalities. The follow up is a challenge as the workers are few... Another challenge is that we often work through translators.

Recently two Turks made professions of faith. They attend meetings and read the Scriptures on their own. This summer we baptized 10 new believers. We see an urgent need for more leaders and currently are training some Turkish believers and the English-speaking Iranians. We are very grateful to our mother church from Samsun as they provide much help. They visit us every Thursday which together with prayers, advise and encouragement are priceless."

Your intercessory prayers for the Christians in Turkey are invaluable!
In Christ,

Daniel Trusiewicz
EBF Mission Coordinator

Planting new churches together! For the glory of God!

