



MP Newsletter – February 2015

The Gospel is advancing in Albania, the country which had been once declared an atheist state. The spiritual openness of the nation is a result of the faithful prayers of God’s people around the world.

Christianity in Albania claims apostolic roots since the Bible mentions a visit of Titus to Dalmatia, the province on the territory of today’s Albania (2Tim 4,10).

From the 15th century to the 19th century, under the rule of the Turkish Ottoman Empire, the dominant religion became Islam. In 1817 the British and Foreign Bible Society made efforts towards providing the Albanians with a New Testament in their own language. These foreign efforts led to establishment of the Albanian Evangelistic Brotherhood in 1892 which had three goals: to preach the Word, to publish it and to open schools in Albanian Language.



In 1944 Albania became a Communist state under the leadership of Enver Hoxha who had ruled the country till 1985. The Communist regime introduced harsh restrictions on both Christians and Moslems. The ruthless persecution against Christians resulted in imprisonments or executions of many religious leaders. In 1967 all religious buildings (about 2000) were closed and Albania was declared an atheist state.

In 1991 Albania regained independence and opened its doors to Christian missionaries. Currently there are about 160 evangelical churches in the country. The nation is comprised of: 70% Muslims, 20% Eastern Orthodox, 10% Roman Catholics and the total number of Protestants is about 9 thousand. The whole population of Albania counts about 3 million.

Albanian Baptists began in 1932 when Edwin and Dorothy Jacques, from the USA began serving in the city of Korce (southeast of Albania). Thanks to their dedication the Gospel advanced and influenced many people.

After the dark period of communism many missionaries, including the Baptists, started writing a new spiritual chapter in the nation's history. These missionaries together with indigenous leaders founded the Baptist Union of Albania in 2003. The union president is **Mondi Palucaj** and the general secretary is **Genis Myrteza**.



There are eight Baptist congregations in the union. Mond is a pastor of a congregation in the north of Albania that was started in 1992 by a missionary from Brasil and this church has now about 50 members. The church owns a building and develops a successful kindergarten ministry. Genis pastors the central Baptist church in Tirana the Way of Hope, that has its own facility too. There are some missionaries from BMS World Mission involved too. This congregation has vision to start other congregations in Tirana. Sandre is pastor in a congregation in the south of Tirana as it is the only Christian Church in this district. Different activities take place every day of the week including a course of English. Fatiene is the church planter in one of the suburbs of Tirana. There are about 10 adults and more than 20 children in the group. They gather in a private home and do all the work by volunteers. Antonio is a missionary from Brasil who came to Albania in 1998 and was involved in Burel (north) and later in Lezha. He is now an evangelist in Tirana to organize events for children and youth that are connected with the gospel presentation afterwards.



New Church Plant in Izberesht was started in 2013 by a couple: Elton and Olta Manelli. The team includes about 20 persons and they run English classes, outreach for teenagers, women and men's meetings, charity activities and special events. During Christmas they organize distribution of presents and food as well as evangelistic activities. Elton and his wife Olta have 2 children.

On Sunday evenings there are services organized by the church plant. About 30 people, mostly young and very lively are present. The group meets in a rented venue and is growing. A Korean missionary from Seoul is involved together with his wife to support the work.

The church plant cooperates closely with the mother church, the Way of Hope, which is the oldest and largest Baptist congregation in Tirana even though was planted only 22 years ago. The mother church provides prayer support, sends mission teams and gives funds to church planters. The church plant of Yzberesht has a lot of potential and steady growth may be expected.

The mission work in Albania has been growing as the number of mature leaders has been increasing and the number of church plants too. This is certainly the result of a wise strategy of the union leaders who successfully build up the indigenous work and welcome the joined efforts of expats.

Prayer requests

1. Pray for the Baptist churches in Albania that they can grow in the knowledge of God and fulfill the Great Commission to reach the new generation of Albanians.
2. Pray for the church plants that they can implement effective strategies in order to begin a substantial Christian movement in Albania.
3. Pray that the Albanian nation may experience a significant spiritual revival.

In Christ,

Daniel Trusiewicz

EBF Mission Partnerships Coordinator

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