

Baptists in Romania

The population of Romania is about 20 million of which 90% are Romanians and the others are ethnic minorities including Hungarians and Gypsies. The dominant religion is Orthodoxy – 90% of population adheres to it and the second largest denomination is Protestantism with 5,5% of followers.

The Romanian Baptists since the last decade of the 20th century have experienced unprecedented freedom as they earlier used to be harshly suppressed by the past Communist regime. According to recent estimates the Evangelical believers in Romania comprise ca. 5 % of the population. At least 7 million Romanians have no access to any Evangelical church and some ethnic groups are still not reached like: Gypsies and Turks.

The Baptist denomination is a mass movement in Romania. There are several mega-churches, the largest one with about 3,000 members is located in Oradea. There are several congregations comprising over 1,000 members that besides excellent preaching usually feature wonderful choirs, music ensembles and impressive buildings.

The Baptist Union of Romania is the third largest Baptist body in Europe. There are 1,722 churches with about 99,000 members. The Convention of Hungarian Baptist Churches in Romania is comprised of 247 churches and nearly 9,000 members.

Baptist Mission in Romania

Dr. Alex Vlasin, Coordinator of the Mission Department in the Baptist Union of Romania says: *“The majority of our existing churches have ambitious mission programs aimed at planting new congregations. Most popular and effective mission projects are: national bible reading campaigns, mission conferences for churches or regional associations, various outreach events and short term mission trips. The prevailing in church planting is a parenting model: a mature church starts a daughter church. It is when a church is planted by an existing church located nearby and the new plant is a satellite to the mother church. The mother church supervises the*



leaders of the daughter congregation and at some point the new church plant becomes autonomous (independent) from the mother church. There are also about 50 churches in Europe (beyond Romania) and additional 50 in 'The North America and Canada Romanian Baptist Association'. We partner with them and together are about to start an international mission agency. We already have about 70 missionaries working among migrants around the world in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Balkans and West Europe."

This kind of parenting model is being implemented by the indigenous church planter **George Tone** who is supported by EBF. George during the last decade has successfully planted one church in Pantelimone (outskirts of Bucharest) and is now doing the reproducing church planting in Popesti (about 20 km from Pantelimone) with the congregation of Pantelimone being the mother church.



George with his family and new planted congregation in Popesti

Popesti is a town in Romania, located in the south-east of Bucharest. According to the census conducted in 2011 the population of Popesti was 22,000 and has grown by ¼ during the previous decade. George writes in his recent report:

"I organized several evangelistic events and can see much potential in Popesti. I am convinced that it is now good opportunity to begin a new congregation there. We can preach the gospel without any hindrances as there are many people who are receptive. Last summer more than 100 new people heard the Word of God.

I also visited with the Mayor of Popesti and discussed the idea of starting new church. He was very open and I also invited him to an annual prayer breakfast being held in the Romanian Parliament, the second largest building of the world. I was happy to see the mayor and vice mayor of Popesti attending this important event.



We started our first meetings in the house of my parents with the intent to develop this project. There is a garage in my parents' backyard which is available for a place of worship after some renovation and remodeling. We have done it with our hands and it was a very hard work but certainly worth it. The results are extraordinary as it is now set up and ready for us to organize meetings. After the work was over we celebrated and enjoyed the fellowship in our new chapel. It was a night full of joy as we sang songs with accompaniment of musical instruments and had a meal together.



We are glad that a group of people participate in Christian meetings each week. There are also many children who are interested in learning to play musical instruments and for this reason we organize a course of training for them. We plan to form an orchestra in the new church. This will take a lot of time and much energy but I know that through it we will glorify God. Some people who come to us are poor and need material help, so we buy necessary products like food etc. and give them.”

This work is a real model of very tangible involvement in the local community, answering the actual needs of the people by offering them the gospel, fellowship, social help and education (spiritual formation, English, music etc.).

Pray that this exciting ministry will continue well and make good progress in future.

In Christ,

Daniel Trusiewicz
EBF Mission Coordinator

Planting new churches together!
For the glory of God!