

Multiplication in Albania

Albania, once declared an atheist state, is now very ripe spiritually although poverty-stricken. The Baptist Union of Albania is one of the smallest in Europe but very missions minded, as the existing churches are being multiplied.

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). Since the 15th century until the 19th century the nation got under the rule of the Ottoman Empire when Islam became the dominant religion. 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 in 1892 to establishment of the Albanian Evangelical Brotherhood which had three goals: to preach the gospel, to publish the Bible and to open schools in Albanian language.

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



In 1991 Albania regained independence and opened its doors to Christian missionaries. Until today at least 160 evangelical churches have been planted in the country. The population of Albania counts about 3 million being comprised of: 70% Muslims, 20% Eastern Orthodox, 10% Roman Catholics and the total number of Protestants is about 9 thousand.

Albanian Baptists began in 1932 in the city of Korce (southeastern Albania). 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, which consists of 8 local congregations with total membership of about 250.

New Church Plant in Yzberisht was started in 2013 by a couple: Elton and Olta Manelli. They selected and trained a team of several persons who run English classes, organize camps and outreach, women and men's meetings, charity activities and special events. Elton and Olta recently made a decision to hand over this already established church to another couple while planning themselves to plant a new church in the down town Tirana. In the most recent report they wrote:

“Six years ago God called us to get involved in the beginning of a small church in the Yzberisht area, Tirana. We started by preaching the gospel and inviting people to Bible study groups. We were committed to introducing them to our Savior and helping young believers apply the teachings of Jesus in their lives. We then started from a home group that has grown over the time significantly. Now the Agape Church is fully established and represents considerable spiritual potential for Tirana and beyond.”



Last summer we organized two camps and in October we did an effective outreach together with a partnering group from England. We plan to repeat an outreach because we see very good results. There is an awareness that some things need to be improved, especially with regard to a follow up.

Agape Yzberisht has an excellent leadership team of several people who oversee every ministry of the church. Olta and I continue to worship at Agape for one more year and simultaneously start new congregation. Now I will be preaching only once a month and two other leaders will do most of the preaching as they have been properly trained to do it. We also trained them how to lead small Bible study groups, how to resolve conflicts and empower other leaders.

Most of our people take part in the Bible studies during the week. We have two groups of women, one for men, one for college students and one for youth. We

actually offer a Bible study for everyone in the church and different materials depending on people's needs are available. For new believers we have some basic lessons called "The Foundation", for women "Significant Women", with men we study a book with the names of the Lord.



The growth of Agape Church is a result of fruitful evangelistic work. Here is the testimony of Anisa who became a Christian and joined the congregation:

"I have heard all my life about Jesus which seemed to me more like a fairy tale. I had to change my mind at the Agape Church's summer camp where I met very devoted believers. They had much love and peace in their hearts, they talked about Jesus in a way that I never heard before. The camp influenced me greatly and the consecutive Bible studies transformed me gradually. I thank God for these believers who introduced me to Jesus. I see big changes in my attitude to family, friends, work, and many little things of life. Since having surrendered my life to Christ, I have more faith and confidence in everything I do. God's love often prompts me to forgive people who hurt me, because I know that I am forgiven thanks to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross."



Please pray for:

1. Pray for the Baptist churches in Albania that they can reach out effectively.
 2. Pray for the pastors and church planters that they can facilitate a substantial Christian movement in Albania.
 3. Pray that the Albanian nation may experience a significant spiritual revival.
- Your prayers for the Baptist mission work in Albania are greatly valued!

In Christ,
Daniel Trusiewicz
EBF Mission Coordinator

Planting new churches together!
For the glory of God!

