

Gospel Progress in Croatia

Evangelism requires sensitivity in approaching people so that they do not reject the gospel before even hearing it...

Baptists in Croatia

The beginnings of Baptist Movement in Croatia are traced to the missionary influence of Johann G. Oncken (1800-84), the “Father of European Baptists”. The very first Baptist congregations in Zagreb and Daruvar were founded in the 1890s. More significant growth was registered between the two World Wars and is attributed mainly to the leadership of evangelist Vinko Vacek. At that time the Croatian Baptists numbered about 6 hundred and were part of Yugoslavia. Further growth was possible after the World War II as the Baptist congregations were planted in several industrial cities, like: Rijeka, Sisak, Karlovac. The Croatian Baptist Union was formed in 1991 and has enjoyed more growth, even to the extent of doubling the number of members and congregations. There are 48 churches and mission stations that comprise the total of 2 thousand members.



Church Planting in Croatia

One of the new church plants is located in Ivanec, about 100 km from Zagreb. There are 15-20 people who during two years have been regularly meeting for a Bible study and prayer. The meetings take place in a rented hall and are led by the indigenous church planter Jonatan (43) who had studied theology in Croatia and USA, is married to Daniela and they together raise two children.

Jonatan says: *“There are two reasons that make us plant a church in Ivanec: the Great Commission and God’s love for the people who need Christ. Our vision is to start a congregation that will be able to influence its vicinity. We also have to recognize that evangelism requires sensitivity in approaching people, so that they do not reject the gospel before even hearing it.”*

Since 2011 Jonatan has led the organization "I Want Life", which significantly contributes to the spread of the gospel through social projects. Thanks to this it is possible to organize summer camps and provide humanitarian assistance to socially

vulnerable families as well as Christian counseling, music lessons, etc., and collaborate with other organizations that have a similar focus.



Following that in 2016 "The House of Opportunity" was launched, a program for young people who at the age of 18 leave the national social welfare system and have no place to go. At the moment there are 6 young people who are preparing for an independent life through a mentoring program that lasts two years. The church members volunteer to help the pupils by spending time and chatting with them about life as well as trying to share the gospel and teach the basics of Christian discipleship. The goal of this ministry is to help the participants in the transitional period as they aspire to become independent. Through these activities God opened many doors, including a gospel mission in the town of Ivanec.

Ivanec has about 15 thousand inhabitants. There is a group of 10 Christians whose mission is to pray and try to win some people for Christ. They go from house to house visiting the inhabitants of Ivanec with a questionnaire and asking questions of Christian faith in order to raise awareness of local people about spiritual things. So far they have visited at least 500 local homes and usually experienced a friendly welcome, including a few invitations to return. Although, there has been a strong opposition from the local Roman Catholic priest who has reacted against them.



In addition to that they have been working with young people in Ivanec through the guitar course, and invited their parents to participate in the evangelization evenings and concerts or film shows. Some of them are ready to join the bible study group. Jonatan coaches one local leader who studies theology and will move in future with his family to Ivanec.

The Mother church "Emmanuel" from Varaždin has encouraged this work by sending out a couple of people to join the mission team, also supported the work by renting a meeting hall and through prayers. There is also excellent cooperation with the Baptist Union of Croatia and the EBF for the establishing a new church in Ivanec. The Baptist congregation of Varazdin was started 25 years ago and has developed a program of planting several Baptist congregations in the region, one of them being Ivanec.

Jonatan wrote in a recent ministry report: *"I believe that God has inspired us to establish a congregation in Ivanec by giving me a vision for the towns in the Varaždin region that are without an evangelical witness. Through the collaboration with local organizations and individual meetings, God has connected us with 25 young people and their families who expressed a need for Christ as their personal Savior. The total number is 50 people with whom we have built friendly relationships. We have started a bible study group for local people and are excited about what else God has in His store..."*

Prayer requests

1. Pray that the mission team in Ivanec will continue the ministry despite challenges.
2. Pray that the people in Ivanec and its vicinity may be receptive to the gospel.
3. Pray that the gospel outreach in Croatia will result in new planted congregations.

In Christ,

Daniel Trusiewicz

EBF Mission Coordinator

**Planting new churches together!
For the glory of God!**

