

## KÁLMÁN MÉSZÁROS:

### **„We organised evangelism for the purposes of extending god's kingdom”**

Past mission activities of Hungarian Baptist Fellowships living outside of the borders  
Hungary,  
including a survey of their present situation

## THESES

- 1. The modern Baptist movement started taking roots in the Carpathian Basin in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first propagators of the Baptist Faith set out in an organised manner along the lines of a well thought through strategy. They mainly went as colporteurs to the larger towns as well as the commercial and cultural centres of historic Hungary providing Bibles to those that were interested. Very few people or families at that time owned a Bible. In the course of this activity, they shared their personal testimonies, emphasising the basic Biblical principles of personal repentance, regeneration and endeavouring to live a holy life. This led to the establishment of many churches all over the whole country.*
- 2. The Baptist revival that swelled into a popular movement by the turn of the century has also impacted the other ethnic groups living in Hungary. The missionaries coming from German speaking areas carried out effective evangelistic work at first among the German and Hungarian speaking population, later on also among the Slovaks, Romanians, Serbs and Ruthenians. This was the reason why the Baptist movement in Hungarian and other languages could be sustained and in some areas - such as e.g. Transylvania - even gain impetus in those parts of Hungary that were artificially partitioned off in Trianon.*
- 3. After Trianon, the Hungarian Baptist Mission also experienced a crisis situation both in the mother country and in the territories cut off. At the beginning of the 1920's, the Baptist Mission had to be reorganised in each of the successor states. They initially remained without direction as they were hermetically sealed off from the head office in Hungary. There were areas, where Hungarians constituted the majority, elsewhere they became bilingual and in some areas linguistic assimilation started.*
- 4. The situation of the Hungarian Baptists was further aggravated by the population exchange subsequent to World War II as well as by accelerating emigration. These lamentable facts were further added to by the dictatorial, atheistic and Hungarian-hating regimes that came into power in the successor states with their church persecuting policies.*
- 5. The Hungarian churches that came into existence among Hungarian emigrants overseas were in a peculiar situation in the last hundred years. The ebb and flow in their membership was always linked to the prevailing situation in the mother country and the territories that were cut off from it. Few opportunities existed for effective communication and for interaction prior to the fall of communism. The Hungarian Baptist World Alliance constituted thereafter has organised three world conferences with several thousand participants. The “disappearance of borders” within the European Union opens up new opportunities for Hungarian Baptists for spiritual or even organisational unification and for making their evangelistic efforts more efficient.*