

Hungary:

Challenges for Prayer:

Disillusion, dissatisfaction and upheaval against the government and economy in particular often characterize life in Hungary. The 1956 uprising and widespread demonstrations in 2006 and following demonstrate the desire for a better state of affairs. Political scandal has brought much disappointment and skepticism. Pray for elected officials, that they would look past political point-scoring, root out the widespread corruption and labor toward improving life for the whole nation.

Hungarians have lost contact with the gospel, despite enjoying a rich theological history. They seek answers in many places: materialism, hedonism, alcohol and, increasingly, false religion. Postmodern mentalities predominate. In recent years, public spiritual life is characterized by an alarming rise in occult activity and eastern mysticism, including pagan witchcraft, ancient Magyar shamanism and Tibetan Buddhism. Most common is a pick-and-choose spirituality that is effectively non-religious, with some personal sentiment. Pray for all falsehoods and empty philosophies to be exposed as such and for Christ to be exalted as the truth in this historically Christian nation. Pray that Hungarians might see the truth of the gospel and the freedom it brings through Jesus.

The openness of the post-Communist 1990s has passed. It is now increasingly difficult to openly witness – restrictions forbid teachers, doctors and such from sharing their faith in the workplace. The Church failed to respond adequately to the window of opportunity that is now largely closed. Christianity, while present and active, does not quite have the impact it should on society, politics, ethics, education and the economy. Pray for a new revival in the Church – following on those from 1939 and 1946-50 – that gives birth to a new spirit of witness and activism.

The Church's impact in Hungary is uneven and inadequate. Some parts of the country are much more alive than others. Within the major denominations, including Catholic and Reformed, are vibrant charismatic and renewal movements. Independent and emerging churches are growing, but trust and unity need to be built between these and the traditional churches. In all groups, positive holiness and spiritual maturity are real needs. In Budapest, believers are blessed with many churches, but they often church-hop rather than commit to one congregation. Apathy and worldliness, as in so many lands, are challenges, even for evangelicals. Pray for unity, trust and cooperation to flourish among churches, and for the Holy Spirit to bring revival and renewal to all expressions of God's family.

There remains a great need for evangelism, despite the increasing amount and types of outreach and public ministry. Christians need to acquire confidence in the power of the gospel and its effectiveness when shared in the right way and in the Spirit. The number of nominal Christians is high, and millions of people have only cursory contact with the good news. There is still resistance to the gospel in much of Hungary. Pray for Spirit-led, creative forms of witness and for wisdom in how, when and where to reach out. Thank God for increasing levels of collaboration in outreach among churches and denominations.

There is a deficit of Christian leadership in Hungary. Pray for the following:

a) Leaders with high morals and fresh vision. Many evangelistic challenges are unmet, many eyes scrutinize the conduct of Christian leaders and many leaders are cautious because of the past. Pray for God's anointing and inspiration for those in leadership.

b) *The release and empowerment of lay leaders.* Most pastors are overworked and spread too thin, and there is a shortage of young pastors, both in active ministry and in training to join the ministry. There is a strong Reformed Elders Association. Lay-training movements are on the rise in most denominations. Pray that the Church might mature in its giving in order to support nationals involved in local and foreign Christian work.

c) *Leadership training.* Hungary is a Central European hub for theological education. There are four Christian universities providing education in theology, humanities and law, with several thousand students enrolled. There is an increasing focus on missions and evangelism. Pray also for the Protestant Institute for Mission Studies, the Pentecostal Theological College, Calvary Chapel Bible College and for teaching seminars run by New Hope International and others. Central European Theological Academy and Word of Life are two of several English-language theological institutions. TEE/BEE is increasingly used, especially to train laity. Pray for the younger generation to commit itself to the work of the Lord, and for the Lord to provide for those who take on full-time training.

Young people remain one of the most receptive groups to loving and culturally relevant witness. Pray especially for:

a) *Teaching of religious knowledge in schools,* in the several hundred Christian schools and in public schools that invite this input. Increasingly, restrictions prevent teachers and evangelists from sharing the gospel in the public school context. Pray for freedom to witness in schools and for gifted people who focus on this ministry.

b) *Children's and youth programs in churches.* Since Hungary opened up, denominational and parachurch youth associations, such as YMCA, Awana, **CEF**, *Dunamis* and others, have grown in scale and impact. Large-scale youth conventions are proving attractive. Foreign mission groups contribute much in this area of ministry.

c) *University students,* who are open to most spiritual influences, both healthy and unhealthy. Nationally led international ministries such as **CCCI**, **MEKDSz(IFES)** and **YFC** continue to grow in size and impact. But with over 200,000 university and college students in Hungary, the majority have no contact with a Christian group.

d) *Summer outreach programs* – by many Hungarian churches and by *Barnabas Csoport*, The Bible League and **OM** – train scores of young people from various denominations to participate in evangelism and follow-up work.

The less-reached:

a) *The Jews.* Before the Holocaust, there were 800,000. Now their numbers are 90,000 – this is still Eastern Europe's largest concentration of Jews outside of Russia. There are several Messianic Jewish communities. Pray for reconciliation between Christians and Jews.

b) *The Romani* (Gypsy) community, Hungary's largest minority and most certainly its most socially and economically disadvantaged. This group has not seen the same spiritual breakthrough as have the Romani in Spain, France and Romania, but several new Protestant and charismatic fellowships are among them. Also, a number of agencies are attempting to meet their social and spiritual needs and, increasingly, ethnic Hungarians are gaining a burden to show the love of Christ to this needy people in both spiritual and practical ways.

c) *The homeless* – who are concentrated in Budapest and number as many as 30,000 – face very difficult living conditions. Pray for the ministries of churches and missions that seek to reach out to them; pray for the establishment of Christian facilities that can care for them and demonstrate the gospel in real ways.

d) *The many immigrant peoples* who make Hungary their home. These include mostly the various Slavic peoples, Chinese and others. Most have a better chance to encounter the gospel in Hungary than in their own nation.

e) *Hungarians abroad.* Concerns remain about discrimination against Hungarian ethnic minorities in Serb-controlled Vojvodina, Romanian Transylvania and southern Slovakia – all remnants of Greater Hungary. Pray for reconciliation between these minorities and the various national majorities, and pray for Hungarian Christians to reach out to their own who live abroad.

Expatriate missions increased numerically in the 1990s, but have since leveled off. Pray for sensitivity and a true servant attitude in seeking to help the Hungarian Church. The main ministries required of expatriates are leadership training and mentoring, equipping the laity and imparting missionary vision. The need is still very real for long-term workers who will learn the language and culture. The Hungarian missions movement is still in its infancy, but the great promise is beginning to be realized – a Missions Expo recently attracted 20,000 people. The largest agencies are: **CCCI, YWAM, RG, ABWE**, and Greater Grace World Outreach.

Christian helps ministries:

a) Scripture distribution. The Hungarian Bible Society was revitalized in 1989. Pray for its ministry in distributing the Bible. A revised New Translation of the Bible in 1990 marked the 400th anniversary of the original Hungarian version.

b) Christian literature is in demand. Many new Christian publishing companies have been founded. The need continues for Christian books, written in Hungarian, that communicate the gospel to non-Christians in today's language and idioms. Balanced books, written in Hungarian, for the spiritual growth of believers are also needed. **CLC** has two bookstores in Hungary. The Hungarian Literature Mission is a major source of evangelistic materials.

c) Christian media. In addition to many broadcast hours a week in Hungarian by **TWR**, opportunities are increasing for local Christian programs on TV and radio. Hungarian Gospel Radio Foundation and the Reformed and Lutheran Churches have their own radio programs. **IT** has a music-recording studio to serve Central Europe. The Internet and a host of Christian websites offer another means for disciplining believers and reaching out to non-Christians.