



The Budapest Story Teller

Introducing the Budapest Story Teller

We would like to present a new way for you to stay informed about the people and ministries associated with the Free Methodist Church in Budapest, Hungary.

The Budapest Story Teller is a monthly e-mail that contains a single short story, interview, praise report, or testimony written or edited by our Hungarian colleague Júlia Tóth. This booklet contains ten stories that were sent out during the past year.

We hope these small glimpses of Hungarian life, ministry, and culture will help you be better able to understand the spiritual climate in Hungary and help you be more effective in prayer.

We would enjoy receiving feedback from you about the Budapest Story Teller and are also happy to respond to any specific questions that you might have. If you would like to receive the electronic monthly **Budapest Story Teller** e-mail or the weekly **Budapest Prayer Letter** e-mail, please contact Larry Winckles at winckles@gmail.com.

Feel free to share these stories with members of your congregation and with any interested parties.

Larry and Katie Winckles
Free Methodist World Missions
Budapest, Hungary

Europe



Motto:

Cum Deo pro Patria et Libertate!

(Historically *latin*)

"With the help of God for Homeland and Freedom!"

Capital and largest city: Budapest

Official languages: Hungarian

Population, 2014 estimate: 9,87 million

Climate: Hungary has a continental climate, with hot summers with low overall humidity levels but frequent rain showers and mildly cold snowy winters.

The Changes

Story #1

*A story of a devoted Hungarian Christian lady who experienced
"life behind the iron curtain".*

November 9, 2014 marked the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. That autumn the Soviet Union dissolved and withdrew from the Eastern and Central European countries it had occupied since the end of WWII. Hungarians refer to their countries transition to a republic at that time as "the changes"

My name is Júlia Tóth, a full time minister with FMWM in the Budapest Ministry Center. I remember many stories of when we were restricted, monitored and reported on by the secret police and its secret agents. The basic philosophy of the communists was to keep the church "inside four walls" (not to let them grow in number, spread and multiply – "this way they will naturally die out" – they claimed).

As a daughter of devoted Christian parents, while growing up I went with the church youth group for excursions from time to time. Before the excursion took place, our pastor was expected to go and report to the local communist police department when it will happen, what will be the exact place and how many of us will be there. Then while playing, singing and enjoying our "free time" in a nice place we noticed police cars driving by very slowly and counting to see if our "crowd" was no larger than what our pastor had reported. The "Right of Assembly" was not known to us. We were restricted in every way.

"The changes" of 1989-90 started to change many things in our everyday lives, yet the heritage is still haunting us. The most damage was done in the area of trust. We were taught to be suspicious of one another, not to trust anyone if we didn't want trouble. We are familiar with the three guiding principles of a dysfunctional home: "Don't feel, don't trust, don't talk". When these three rules were ruling a region, a nation and all areas of society for 45 years it became the "nature of the nation". Trust is still the area where "the changes" won't happen quickly.

After 25 years of freedom we – especially Christians - still face the biggest challenge to give enough time to people to observe us, come closer, learn about us and join us while we follow Jesus, who wants us to trust him fully. While we serve Jesus and serve our neighbors we learn to be patient while breaking down "The Dividing Wall of Distrust" brick by brick with the help of the Holy Spirit.

We celebrate His redeeming love bringing out people from the slavery of sin. We celebrate His work as we open wide the door of The Budapest Ministry Center, hoping that this open door opens the way to the Kingdom of God for many who still live behind the "Iron curtain of Sin", separated from Jesus and from His Body.

**"Because of his kindness, you have been saved through trusting Christ.
And even trusting is not of yourselves; it too is a gift from God."**

Ephesians 2:8 (TLB)

The first and last “real Christmas” of a very lonely man

Story #2

A story of a hidden treasure in our neighborhood

In memory of Zoltán István László .

One of our neighbors brings her little kids regularly to a music class program for toddlers that takes place in the Budapest Ministry Center. She noticed the other day that we have five very nice postcards on display made out of our neighbor Zoltán's paintings.

She said to Judit, to our assistant pastor's wife: *"How come you knew him? I never saw him sober or approachable! We just did not want to meet him in our building. We never had a chance to get to know the more pleasant side of his character."*

Zoltán was a very lonely, 68 years old alcoholic, mentally confused man with a great talent to paint pictures and blessed with a soft heart. It was very unpleasant though to bump into him on a street on his bad days. He was so lonely that he yelled on the top of his voice cursing and displeased with the "whole world". Over a course of about five years Larry became his "best friend" as Larry was willing to stop on the street from time to time for a little chat.

Zoltán stopped drinking during his last nine months of his life on Earth. He came regularly to church and he enjoyed his first and last "real Christmas" in a loving fellowship in 2012. He expressed several times how sorry he was about his "wrong-doings". His health started to decline very fast. He received all the most needed crucial physical help and support from our fellowship. He died in February 2013 in peace, believing that Jesus accepted him despite his "wrong-doings".



**".. the Messiah came to save the lost."
Matthew 18:11 (TLB)**

Jesus declared: "I am the Bread of Life"

Story #3

A story about spiritual hunger in Hungary.

Jesus declared "I am the Bread of Life"

This is why we gave this name to the Hungarian NGO: "Bread of Life Foundation" (established in year 2000) representing Free Methodist World Missions in Hungary.

When we think about people who we know and love, we are keenly aware of their spiritual hunger, their void in their soul and their need for physical food. We are happy to serve them food in any form.

Here is one of the ways how we address their spiritual hunger:

We are thankful to be able to distribute the UCB (United Christian Broadcasters) "The Word for Today" devotional readings in Hungarian, published by UCB Bob and Debby Gass Ministries <http://www.thewordfortoday.com.au/> We also offer "The Upper Room Daily Devotional Guide" published in Hungarian as well. <http://devotional.upperroom.org/>

We provide 30 copies of each of these booklets each quarter free of charge. They run out of stock very quickly! People - participants of several outreach programs all throughout the week - regularly take them home and they read them! For some of them this is their only source of spiritual food.

Júlia, our full time administrator received a phone call twice from her neighbor lady saying: "I believe that everything is true in these devotional booklets. I read them both every morning while enjoying my coffee. I never heard about such things in my life! Faith was never addressed in my family Thank you for providing them." Her name is Éva. She comes from time to time to our outreach programs.



**Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life.
Whoever comes to me will never go hungry,
and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.
John 6:34-36 (NIV)**

My new Spiritual Home

Story #4

A story of a lady who wanted to find her spiritual home.

My story started three months ago, when I finally decided to visit the church on Villányi Street, Budapest. One day as I was surfing the web, a page opened up. I looked at it really briefly and I had the impression that this must be a friendly church established by American missionaries. I had not even checked the name of the denomination at that time yet. I came to the saving faith in Jesus in 1989. After that I attended to a charismatic church for awhile then I belonged to a traditional church for ten years. Changes were taking place both in me and in my second church. I felt the urge recently to start looking for a church where I felt I belonged to. Looking at the web page I felt the urge to visit this church.

The next day was Sunday (September 7, 2014), so I went... Friendly people greeted me. I sensed the loving atmosphere and the presence of the Holy Spirit. It was very inviting. I felt really good. I was invited to the grill party after the worship service. I felt really awkward. Being a first time visitor and not knowing about the pot-lock lunch I did not bring anything to share. Every person, women and men were busy setting the tables, putting chairs out in the garden, like long-time friends knowing one another and knowing their home well. The fact that two of the church leaders had time for me to sit and talk during the party gave me chance to introduce myself. This exceeded my expectations. I spent a wonderful fellowship time with these „new” people in my life.

The search of who the Free Methodists are really started when I went home that day. The Internet helped me a lot. I loved everything about them. I thanked the Lord for leading me to this fellowship. He knew what I needed! I went to church next Sunday with a new enthusiasm to go. I receive so much and I can give as well. Belonging to a „Triplet” accountability group gave me chance to grow in faith, feel connected and be disciplined. I am happy that my mother joined this FMC Church in Budapest, too. We see Christ’s Love in action here, we see Jesus touching and changing lives here, we enjoy worship and fellowship. One of my burdens to reach out and touch our neighborhood community.

The misconception of being a follower of Christ is still very active in our people in Hungary. I still see the mark of the communist years, especially in how men are thinking about Christian spirituality. Unfortunately this topic is still a taboo – an inappropriate, private thing. Hungarians – especially men – live on the presumption that religion and faith is the inner support for those who are „stupid” and „weak”. Men – generally speaking – are trying to live life by their own efforts (pride) running after career, positions, power, recognition, and money. Yet most of them fail by human standards. The average Hungarian man barely reaches the minimum income of the living. Many of their lives and family fall apart after years of disappointment and struggle. Some men start seeking God after their lives became a disaster.

I am hurting in this area as well, since my husband and my son don't want to have any business with God yet. I am convinced that my Lord has a perfect plan for them and the day is coming when we will praise God together as a family. Grace is at work in the midst of my struggles.

I love writing novels, poems and Christian stories for kids. I had almost given up on publishing. God made a miracle on this area in my life as well. Katie Winckles gave me the phone number of two Christian kids' magazines. My biggest joy during this last six months is that they happily published several of my stories and poems. God is faithful! When I almost gave up my dreams, God touched the situation! I am so happy to serve Hungarian kids with my stories and I am eager to reach my friends, co-workers and neighbors as an active member of my newly found spiritual home, the FMC Budapest Church on Villányi street.

shared by Szilvia Szabó



**"Ask, and you will be given what you ask for.
Seek, and you will find.
Knock, and the door will be opened."
Matthew 7:7 (TLB)**

The Gospel is not too difficult...

Story #5

A story of a man, the father and his three teen-aged sons.

Our Free Methodist Budapest Ministry Center has a nice, light, cheerful meeting room with a cherry-colored conference table in the middle and blue chairs around. A group of six men (young and not so young) gather around it once a week on Tuesday afternoons to study the Word of God. They are all seekers. Each of them is precious to us and precious to our Heavenly Father. Each of them has his own touching story.



János {Yah-no-sh} and his wife, Andrea started to come to the Budapest FMC eight years ago. They were both struggling with different addictions. We learned that four years previously their three children had been taken away by the social service agency while the family lived out in the bush near one of the railway stations of a Budapest suburb.

The three boys were placed into foster care. Without a home, without a job, and without her three kids the mother was desperate

enough to start seeking God. Then this petite mother made a tremendous effort to get work and save up enough money to rent an apartment, so that she could eventually get her kids back. She faithfully visited them each week-end while her husband continued drinking and being a gang leader in the bush. Our Recovery Group leaders, Margaret and Joe, dearly loved them, supported them, and introduced them to our church fellowship. They started to attend regularly, but then after a while they disappeared.

Five years passed by... On an extremely cold Sunday in February – in the middle of the church service – a very sad and down-cast man walked into the fellowship room. The service stopped while the entire congregation devoted its attention to him. It was János, standing in front of the fellowship sobbing and announcing that his wife had frozen to death on the street in the vicious cold weather just three days prior. In the midst of the shock and the grief over what had happened, there was at least the comfort that Andrea had surrendered her life to Jesus long before this sad incident happened.

Since that painful February morning János has remained with our fellowship. His addictions did not go away immediately, but Péter, our assistant pastor, faithfully looked after János in his darkest hours. Now János has reconnected with his three sons, and they come regularly to the weekly Bible study. The consequences of the past are still a heavy load on his shoulders but „the unfolding of God’s Word gives light” to János and his sons as they continue to seek God and learn about His ways.

The Unfolding of your words gives light

Story #6

A story of Misi, the retiree.

Misi {Mee-shee} is a loving, caring, accepting, faithful, reliable, and gentle fellow. Everybody loves Misi and his caring presence. Kids love Misi, English students love Misi, church people love Misi, neighbors love Misi. He is a real "gentle – man." Because of a work-related accident many years ago, he has hard time thinking in abstractions. Everything is concrete to him. He needs very specific examples - then he „gets the picture.”

Misi is one of our most diligent English students , one of our most willing helper at Men’s Breakfasts and one of the most faithful Bible study group members. Recently the group began a study of the Book of Acts. Misi was puzzled by what the "gift" of the Holy Spirit could be that the disciples were told to wait for by Jesus. What kind of "present" was it? Several others in the group tried to explain the spiritual meaning to him. Finally he said, "Oh, so it's like we are the candle and the Holy Spirit comes and lights the flame!" The Holy Spirit gave him a way to understand! It was a wonderful moment!



**“The unfolding of your words gives light;
it gives understanding to the simple.”**

Psalm 119:130 (NIV)

Spring Arbor FMC 2015 Hungary VISA Team

Story #7

A story of one week practical love.

What a joy to give and to receive! Each participant was blessed during the intense time of the one-week construction project in April, 2015 at the FMWM Budapest Ministry Center. We had a part of our basement in original condition. we would like to start using it.

But before construction, destruction had to happen in our building that was built in 1897! This is a special building: it serves both as the Ministry Center of Free Methodist World Missions in Hungary and as the home of Budapest Free Methodist Church.



120-year old plaster had to be knocked off the walls and 16 cubic meters of dirt had to be removed in order to level the floor. Can you imagine all the dust and noise and backaches and hurting muscles and the sneezing of people with allergies? Some numbers will speak clearly. There were 9 members of the VISA Team with 29 Hungarian volunteers working along with them. 20 of these volunteers do not regularly take part in the life of the church, with some of them knowing little or nothing about Christ.

They are our friends from our English outreach program at the local Family Help Center! They came cheerfully, willingly, and ready to work. Some of them came for two hours, some of them were here every day of the week. The ladies fed lunch to between 18 and 34 people each day!

Our goal was not only doing construction work. Our other main purpose was building people up, showing them Christ's love and acceptance. Helping to remove bad, old, dusty experiences from their hearts. By the grace of God and by the love of committed men and women both purposes were accomplished. Our "Singing John" said that we should have such events like this more often! What was the attraction? It was Jesus, visible in the lives of each person from the team and each person from the church.. We would like you all, who faithfully support us, to get a glimpse of what happened in Budapest in April. We have three articles in a series written by team members Kathy Cole, Tobin Cole and Marcie Nye. Enjoy! Glory and praise be to God and many thanks to His loving children!

**"For God is not unfair. How can he forget your hard work for him,
or forget the way you used to show your love for him
.... by helping his children?"**

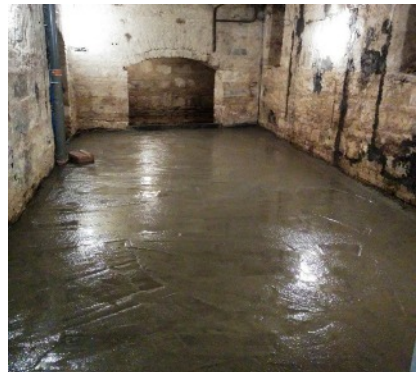
Hebrews 6:10 (TLB)



**Spring Arbor
Free Methodist Church
2015 Hungary Team**



BEFORE



AFTER

Spring Arbor FMC 2015 Hungary VISA Team

Story # 8

The story through Kathy Cole's, the team leader's eyes.

While speaking at Spring Arbor Free Methodist church in the summer of 2014, Larry and Katie Winckles asked for a team to come to Hungary to refurbish a cellar adjacent to their worship center. Nine people heard the call, responded positively, arranged the financing, and arrived in Budapest on April 18, 2015. And what did they find?

- A gifted, organized church team ready to receive them.
- The Abel Panzio – built in 1913 – a comfortable bed and breakfast establishment, located less than a block from the Worship Center.
- Intimate Sunday worship experiences that encouraged the soul and revived the spirit
- Back-breaking, muscle-throbbing work days.
- Opportunities to peel potatoes and carrots, chop cabbage, and wrap silverware with new friends who had limited English skills but big hearts, warm smiles, and frequent hugs.
- Delicious Hungarian cuisine including several meals prepared at the worship center.
- English Class students eager and prepared to share pictures of their families with the Americans during the class session, and then ready and eager to assemble greeting cards while Hungarian and English chatter filled the room.
- A Little Market filled with meat stalls fringed with hanging sausages, colorful bins of fresh vegetables, vinegar-filled tubs of sauerkraut and pickled vegetables, orderly rows of spices, refrigerated cases of prepared desserts, and bucket-after-bucket of fragrant, fresh flowers.
- A public transportation system that works. The team tried them all: buses, trams, subways, and a river cruise! Best of all – walking the last few blocks to the guest house, smelling the sweet lilacs and wisteria escaping through the fences along the way.
- A beautiful central city hugging the shores of the Danube and graced by elegant bridges.
- A leadership team creating opportunities to establish new friendships; build relationships; live by example; and think ahead to meet the physical, social, and spiritual needs of people.
- Individual passion to spread the hope of Jesus to a pessimistic, post-communist, post-Christian population who grew up under the mantra, “Don’t feel, don’t trust, don’t talk!”

And so, nine people left Budapest with warm memories of people and places, thankful hearts for having been a part of the work project, and deep appreciation for the Free Methodist leaders who serve there. They pray that their lives gave off the sweet fragrance of Jesus to those they met and that the refurbished cellar will be used to expand the vision and win more people to Jesus.

Spring Arbor FMC 2015 Hungary VISA Team

Story # 9

The story through Tobin Cole's, the 11 year old team member's eyes.

Greetings, all the way from the Buckeye State of Ohio! I was so excited when my grandparents invited me to join them on my first mission trip. I have so many things I was looking forward to, including serving the Lord in another country, experiencing another culture, and having a relationship with brothers and sisters in Christ from a different continent. I got to do everything I wanted to do and more!

As I reflect back on my time in Hungary, a few highlights stood out to me.

First and foremost, the sights were amazing! The Easter market was a fun place to buy souvenirs, listen to folk music, and eat traditional Hungarian food. The Citadel, a former fortress, has a spectacular view of the city. Another historical monument is Parliament, the government building. I was intrigued that I was able to learn some of the history of this amazing city. I could go on and on and write page after page about the sights I took in while I was there.

Now to get to the reason for my trip... the work. We started on Monday and finished on Saturday morning. During those days, we cleared the room, took all the plaster off the walls, leveled out the floor and got ready to pour the cement. On Friday we woke up ready to pour. The people not working with the concrete were helping to build the wall that would create the separation between the bathroom and the main room. I am proud of how we helped the church renovate the room!

Lastly, I would like to share about some of the relationships that were either started or strengthened. Like I mentioned before, my grandparents invited me to go on this wonderful trip. With living in another state, I do not get to see them all the time, so it was a privilege to spend 12 days with them! Also, I met so many people and created new



relationships that I'm excited to continue. It was unbelievable meeting the staff at the church and working beside the ESL members. These relationships I will carry with me the rest of my life.

The gorgeous sights, the diligent work, and the outstanding people are the key ingredients that made this trip so sweet. I am excited to see how God will use this experience as I grow in maturity. Thank you for being a part of this legacy!

Spring Arbor FMC 2015 Hungary VISA Team

The story through Marcie Nye's eyes.

Beautiful mandolin music, played by Péter Tóth, welcomed our mission team on our first Sunday in Hungary at the Free Methodist Fellowship. That was when I had an inkling that we were in for a special time during our stay in Hungary. We all sang praise songs during the service in Hungarian and English, well, actually, we Americans just hummed along when Hungarian was sung. Beautiful times continued as we shared with the warm, friendly people of Hungary. We ladies prepared food together, cleaned and organized together and shopped together as the men toiled away in the cellar, creating added space for more fellowship. Our team attempted to share our faith, hope and love, often through gestures and sign language, and despite the language and cultural barriers, it was surprisingly possible to do this. Of course, it helped that Larry, Katie, Júlia, Ildikó, Péter and Judit all spoke English. We came to know and appreciate the people through working together. And work together we did, in harmony and with consideration and care for one another.



Although the church fellowship there in Hungary is smaller, its people are mighty in spirit.

We were overwhelmed by the majesty, beauty and size of the Parliament Building as viewed from the Danube River boat cruise. And the view from the height of the Citadel was also lovely, as were the night lights of Castle Hill. We were so proud of our selves when we "conquered" the public transport system, which is excellent and which we used frequently. We had such a variety of experiences. A lovely tapestry of memories was woven with the colors and textures of the rich Hungarian culture, its people and its difficult



history. A special memory of a lifetime was created. We can only hope that we were able to transmit a sense of the way in which our faith nurtures and sustains us. We also hoped to show the great joy we experience in giving to others through our service, and our presence, as Christ instructs us to do. The men really almost gave the last full measure of their strength to the project with all of their hard labor, and they tried to let their work be their witness. The people of the fellowship were able to share their faith,

hope, love and dreams with us in return.

“I found my identity in Christ. I never had one before!”

Story # 10

On May 17th 2015, on a very nice Sunday afternoon members of our church gathered together to celebrate two baptisms! For this occasion we rented the swimming pool of a local high school. Larry and Péter officiated at the ceremony. Following some introductory words about the significance of baptism, the entire gathered congregation recited the Apostles' Creed. Then attention turned to Éva and Misi, the two people who were to be baptized. They both positively affirmed their faith in Jesus Christ and their desire to be baptized.



Misi {Mee-shee} our kind brother came a long way from his strong Catholic background. His trust was build very slowly in Jesus and in us as his new friends and spiritual family. When he came up out of the water his face reflected the joy that he felt inside. His story shows how faithful God is and how much we need to be patient and loving as we co-laboring with our Savior who loves the lost.

Éva was next, and her face also expressed that same joy. She declared: **“I found my identity in Christ. I never had one before! I want the Holy Spirit to fill me up”**. She grew up not receiving love and care in her childhood home due to extreme poverty and misery. She is a very smart lady and has been searching for love and acceptance all of her life.

Both Misi and Éva came to our fellowship through English class outreach ministries in the local Family Help Center. PTL.



Following the baptisms Péter prayed for each person to receive the Holy Spirit. After everyone had changed into dry clothing, the gathered group sang a song of praise that echoed beautifully throughout the hall. And then everyone offered their congratulations! It was a wonderful joyful Sunday afternoon of celebrating Jesus who sets us free!

“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

Luke 19:10

**FMWM Budapest Ministry Center's fellowship room
is called "Közhely" (Common Place)**

This is a flexible, multipurpose space. BMC hosts activities that help develop a sense of community and provide useful services in a comfortable environment with the purpose of reaching people for Christ.

Regular Outreach Programs

- Literature Night
- Men's Breakfast
- Ladies Tea
- Film Club
- Creative Afternoons
- Children's Activities
- Ladies' Exercise Class
- Music Programs
- Music preschool
- Game Afternoons

Special Events

- Art Exhibitions

**The Free Methodist Church Service
(In Hungarian)**

- Every Sunday morning at
10:30 a.m.

Other programs include:

- Bible Studies
- Counseling
- Conferences
- Training
- Excursions
- Free Library
- Christian Recovery 12-step
groups



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