

## **HUNGRY IN HUNGARY**

By David Klinedinst

*“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:16).*

Have you ever seen someone who is hungry? I mean, really hungry. They are completely focused on satisfying that desire. Nothing else matters until that need is met. Well, there I was standing in front of hungry people. I couldn't speak their language and they couldn't speak mine. Eighty people were staring at me waiting for me to say something, waiting for me to satisfy their hunger.

I was in the city of Szombathely (pronounced som-ba-tie) in western Hungary. Ten million people live in this secular European country. Only 4,700 are Seventh-day Adventists. No Seventh-day Adventists live in Szombathely.

Five years ago, Istvánné and Anna Gyürüs (jew-rus), pastors in the Duna Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, decided to move to Szombathely—a city of 80,000 people—and plant a church. Two years ago, they started what they call Bible University. They rented a room and sent out thousands of flyers inviting people to attend classes about the Bible. Sessions were divided into semesters and include lectures, presentations, and

quizzes—much like any university. Eighty to a hundred people began gathering every Monday night for the classes.

After two years of classes the Gyürüs decided it was time to introduce their students to distinctive Adventist beliefs. Thus, I found myself on the fourth floor of the city library in downtown Szombathely. We were going to embark on a journey that would bring the students face to face with “testing truths” for the first time, and I was nervous.

Questions flooded my mind: *“Were the students ready for this? How would they react? Why did I agree to do this? Why didn’t I just go to Africa where I could record a hundred baptisms?”*

The truth is, I believe I was right where God wanted me, and it was a wonderful experience. Let me tell you about some of the hungry people I encountered in Hungary.

Joseph is a man of medium build in his early 40s. He had been attending Bible University for two years. He attended our meetings almost every night, sitting in the back of the room by the registration table.

One night I decided it was time to use a decision card and invite people to consider baptism. Hungarians shy away from being too direct or forward, so I was concerned, but this was the only way I knew to find out

what was going on in the students' minds. I needed to know how they were responding to the messages.

That night Joseph indicated that he wanted to be baptized, so I decided that we should visit him. Now when it comes to making visits in a foreign country, I am out of my comfort zone. I am totally dependent on my hosts. I don't know the language. I don't know where anything is. I don't know which way to go. I can barely read the map, and even the words I can read I can't pronounce (try Egyhazasradoc). I am totally dependent on my hosts.

Eventually, however, we found Joseph's house and knocked on the door. As he recognized us, his face brightened with a broad smile. He immediately invited us in. As we were sitting down he offered us something to drink (Hungarians are very hospitable people), and while we sipped our juice, Joseph told us his story.

Two years earlier he was searching for truth. He had begun to dabble in New Age theories and practices, but one day he saw a crumpled piece of paper on the ground. A voice seemed to tell him to pick it up. As he unwadded the paper, he discovered it was an advertisement to the Bible University classes that were being offering by Pastors Istvánné and Anna. The voice seemed to instruct him to attend.

I had heard speakers tell stories like this before, and I was usually skeptical. But now Joseph was relaying his personal story to me. I usually get nervous when people tell me they hear voices, but who am I to judge? God works in mysterious ways. Joseph was now attending the evangelistic meetings and requesting baptism.

When we invited the people to come to church and experience their first Sabbath, there was Joseph sitting, not in the back row, but in the front row. Joseph was hungry.

Then there was Elvira. She is probably in her 70s. When we knocked on her door, she was excited to see us and invited us in right away. As we sat in her small apartment, I asked her why she had decided to attend the Bible University and to come to the evangelistic meetings. I listened as Anna translated Elvira's life story.

Elvira had been taught that God was a stern, harsh judge. One of the key religious figures in her life constantly told her that God was angry with her. Elvira struggled with feeling distant from God. She knew the theory that Jesus had died for her sins, but she was harassed by this notion that God was angry with her. She lived in fear.

As I listened to her story, my mind raced through verses in the Bible that speak of God's love. There was one in particular for which I could not

remember the reference. So I silently prayed, “Lord, please bring this text back to my memory.”

Finally, I remembered it! I asked Anna to read Romans 5:8 from the Hungarian Bible. In English it reads, “But God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” I also asked her to read John 3:17: “For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”

As Anna read these verses of assurance, I could see tears forming in Elvira’s eyes. They were tears of joy—tears of relief. She was comforted to hear from the Bible that God is not angry with her, but rather that He loves her and desires to save her. My own heart melted as I saw the power of God’s Word touch this woman’s soul. The next Sabbath morning, Elvira was worshipping with the Adventist believers. She was hungry, and she had been nourished by God’s word.

Then there was Victor. He is totally blind (physically, but definitely not spiritually). I met him in the capital city of Budapest, where I held a three-day set of meetings. Victor is a committed Christian who is hungry for God and desires to share his faith with other people who are blind. Together he and his wife, Eva, work to coordinate a special outreach to people who

are blind in Budapest. Their organization is called the Hungarian Adventist Mission for the Blind.

I spent a day with this group. Since I work for Christian Record Services for the Blind, which has headquarters in the United States but provides Braille and large-print reading materials to many parts of the world, they invited me to make a presentation.

Victor and Eva invited many of their blind friends from the community to come to the church for this meeting. It was a delight to see the church filled with both sighted people and people who are blind. When I finished the presentation, Victor stood up and spoke to the group as well. He is truly a preacher in his own rite.

In the afternoon, they co-ordinated a special program where people who were blind displayed their daily living skills and talents. Then those who were sighted were blindfolded and attempted the same activities, but with limited success. It gave those with vision a greater appreciation and respect for those who are blind.

This group meets together twice a month for fellowship, friendship, and Bible study. This is Victor's ministry. He is hungry to share Jesus with his friends who are blind.

All of this reminds me of Jesus' ministry. He met hungry people every day—people who were searching for something better than this world offers. Jesus became their friend. He mingled with them in the marketplace. He ate with them in their homes. He sat down with them on the grass by the sea. He connected with them wherever they were. Jesus invites us to do the same. Hungry people are not just in Hungary. They are in your neighborhood. They are in your school. They are in your workplace.

Jesus once said, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few" (Matthew 9:37). Jesus invites us to become friends of the hungry and to invite them to the spiritual table that will satisfy all their needs.