

Dan Sheffield Update

"facilitating international urban ministry development"

2007 — Issue #1



Hi friends,

I want to thank you for your continuing support for my engagement in urban ministry training! Your support for my ministry as a full-time missionary through **Giving Streams** enables me to be involved in urban ministry training programs in at least 6 cities around the world each year, as well as ongoing consultation with the church planting teams via email.

In the past six months I have been working with missionary and national leaders in Accra, Ghana; Bangkok, Thailand; Phnom Penh, Cambodia; Hyderabad & Kolkata, India; and Budapest, Hungary. In most cases, the costs of the training programs for these workers were covered through your generosity in supporting my ministry expenses.

Your co-labourer, Dan

my blog: www.sheffield.typepad.com

1. Feature Article: Budapest Church Plant gets rooted in community

It was December 2001, and I had been invited to Budapest by Jerry Coleman, the Area Director for Free Methodist World Missions (USA) in Europe. He wanted me to work with the church planting team in Budapest, Hungary. But I wasn't convinced. I wanted to make sure the church planting team actually wanted me to come, not just their boss!

The team was a new group of people that had just come together in 2000. They were new to the city, learning the language, with limited experience in church leadership, and no church planting experience.

They were learning things about life and ministry in Hungary that was causing them to question why they were even there. They had several visions of how the church plant should develop and what outreach ministries they should be involved with.

And they were wondering why they were struggling...

Developing relationships

Often I find that the key to helping a team like this is to develop their trust. So over the intervening years, I have taken a number of trips to Budapest. Along with the team I have learned some of the history of this country and this city. As I have learned to understand their ministry situation, we have been able to discuss methods and approaches for bringing the Jesus story into their community in a relevant manner.

Did you know that a Turkish Muslim army defeated and occupied Budapest in 1541? Did you know that 19th century piano virtuoso Franz Liszt is regarded as a Hungarian national treasure? Did you know that last October was the 50th anniversary of their revolution against the Communist Soviet Union, before they were violently crushed as the Russian Army invaded Hungary? On my most recent trip to Budapest I visited the Hungarian Holocaust Museum. Despite maltreatment of Jews from 1938 onwards it was only in the last months of WWII that the Hungarian government actually sent over half a million Jews and Roma to German death camps under extreme pressure from the occupying Nazis.

In looking for ways to share the gospel in Hungary, understanding their history is of vital

importance. During the 1990s Hungary had the highest suicide rate of any country in Europe. As the team has come to see how their social context affects their church planting efforts, they have begun to develop deep relationships in the neighbourhood where they are working.

Touching the heart of the community

Today, almost seven years after their church plant was initiated, the team can see how deeply rooted they have become. One of the new believers in their faith community has known people in the team for a number of years, but was always suspicious of their motives. In a country that has been conquered over and over by outside forces, it probably seems that North American missionaries are just another one of those forces.

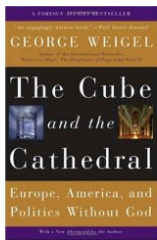
This is one of the concerns that I have worked on with this team. How to overcome this suspicion? Some team members thought they should develop a house church, others had no ideas! Getting through this dilemma has been one of my tasks over the last six years. Finally the team was able to recognize that small groups in houses was a fundamental barrier to the growth of their church, they needed a public space.

Last year they were able to purchase a large, century-old house on a high-traffic street in their neighbourhood and covert it into a meeting place and community centre. Funny thing, now their church plant is starting to thrive. Hungarian friendships are now bearing fruit, as they place their ministry in the public eye.

If you want to do a bit more reading about the Budapest church plant and some of the unique things they are doing, you can read a post on my blog that will link you to Larry Winckles blog in Budapest.

http://sheffield.typepad.com/dansheffield/2007/03/third_space_in_.html

2. Recommended Resources



If you are interested in some reading on the secularization of Europe and some of the reasons why the continent needs to be reintroduced to the Living Jesus, this is a good introduction.

http://www.amazon.ca/Cube-Cathedral-America-Politics-Without/dp/0465092683/ref=sr_1_4/701-1962193-9563527?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1175570083&sr=8-4

3. Quote

Methodist historian, David Hempton, suggests that the decline of Methodism and the rise of secularization in Britain from the 1960s onward can be attributed to: "believers who no longer found the institutional church relevant to their daily lives, stopped attending. When they stopped attending, then they began to stop believing."

MEANINGFUL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS REQUIRED TO STIMULATE FAITH MATURITY