

100 ÉVES AZ ÉSZAK-AMERIKAI MAGYAR BAPTISTA SZÖVETSÉG (5)

MUSIC IN OUR CHURCHES

By Ethel Petre Kish

In the late 19th century there was a great influx of immigrants arriving from the European countries to fill the needed work force in the industrialized cities in the United States. A large number of Hungarians came to Cleveland. They colonized several sections of the city. The East Side had its "little Hungary" in the Buckeye Road area and on the West Side around Lorain Avenue and Fulton Road.

The Cleveland Hungarian Baptist Mission began on the East Side at Holton Avenue and 79th Street. Because the Buckeye Road area was so heavily populated with Hungarians, there was a need for another church which was located at 116th Street and Buckeye Road.

On the West Side, Fulton Road and Chatham Avenue was the location of the third church. My father, the Rev.

Gabriel Petre, was the pastor and that is where I spent my growing up years.

Music had a very important part in the life of the church. It has been said often that it is a universal language and it can be understood and enjoyed by everyone.

In the Bible we can find references to music. In Psalm 92:1 David wrote, "*It is good to praise the Lord and to make music to your name, O Most High*", and in Psalm 95:5, "*Make music to the Lord with the harp and sound of singing and with trumpets*". David played the ancient harp and lyre. He appreciated what music can do. It can reach the heart and soul of the listener. It can also have a calming and soothing effect.

Hungarians love music and it is an important way to express themselves in their worship and praise to God. Most of our early churches had a brass band or an orchestra. *The earliest one on record was in New Castle, PA in 1912* (see

photo). My father, Gabriel Petre, is holding the tuba. The band usually played before the Sunday evening services, also for special gatherings, funeral processions, and for picnics. On the photo you can see the United States flags, indicating that it was taken at a 4th of July picnic. They were proud to fly the flag of their newly adopted country. The music could be heard on the street, especially in the summer months when the windows were open. Music had great drawing power. It brought people into our churches to hear the music and the gospel which followed.



The New Castle Hungarian Baptist Brass Band around 4th of July, 1912.

My childhood days were lived in Cleveland where each of the three churches had a brass band. All three bands had outstanding musicians playing their music to the Glory of God. What a joy it was to attend the wonderful evangelistic services each church held and to listen to the pre-service concert of marches and religious music. It helped prepare the congregation for the message which followed.

There were special quarterly combined services of the churches and the three bands joined together to play. Oh, what a wonderful concert they presented!

On March the 15th, band members always attended the special memorial services at the Louis Kossuth Memorial. He was a great statesman in Hungary and they wanted to remember him. Sometimes it was so cold that the valves on the instruments froze.

Street meetings were held in the Hungarian neighborhoods and small groups of musicians played to attract attention.

The crowd could enjoy the music, hear the gospel message with an invitation to the church. It wasn't always kindly received, but that did not stop my father, Rev. Petre, from preaching to those who would listen.

In the Spring and Fall the mid-western churches held a *conference* and all bandsmen were requested to participate. I remember the wonderful large band of fine musicians in the Akron church. What beautiful music they played! So professional!

The Detroit church had violinists so they had an orchestra. They, too, praised God with music.

Wadsworth church had a small group and I remember Gizella Taylor (Mrs. W. Bikacsan) with her accordion. Beautiful music!

Without television and radio in the early years, children were encouraged to play an instrument, usually whichever one was needed in the band. In our family of six children, we all played an instrument:

my sister, *Esther*, the baritone horn, I played the French horn, *Isabel*, the trombone, *Helen*, the violin, *Gabriel*, the trumpet, *Gene*, the piano, my father, the tuba, and mother, the organ and piano. Our family loved music.

After I was married and moved to Connecticut, I took my horn with me and played in the *Bridgeport church* band for many years. Silliman Baptist had a large band and my husband, Ernie, was the director. Those were memorable years. We had so many good times in the band. Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve we would serenade the church families. We appreciated the hot chocolate and pastries which followed. These are wonderful memories. We loved playing "Billy Sunday's Favorites" overture, plus other wonderful music. After I stopped playing, I loaned my horn to two young ladies who took my place in the band. I still have my horn, for sentimental reasons and soon it will be an antique. (To be continued)



Ernest J. Kish 1918 - 2007

I have some wonderful memories of Ernest J. Kish, who left this earth to be with the Lord on November 5, 2007. My association with Ernest (we called him Ernie) goes back many years.

The 1930's were Depression years, when many people in smaller towns and cities found themselves out of work and migrated to larger cities for jobs. Ernie was one of them who came from Bridgeport, Connecticut, along with relatives from Indiana, who came to live with Rev. Gabriel Petre and his family (my family) in Cleveland, Ohio.

Ernie and I quickly became fast friends. He played the baritone horn and so did I. We sang in church choirs and later led several of them, and so did I. We were both always active in church work. And that's where he met a beautiful young lady, my sister Ethel, and promptly fell in love with her. They were married on October 19, 1940, and moved to Bridgeport.

For many years, my husband and I saw little of Ethel and Ernie because we left for the mission field in Peru, South America, for 5 years, and after that, spent 24 years in Puerto Rico in religious and educational work. My husband, Dr. H. Ellis Plyler, did substitute several times as administrator at the Bethesda Retirement Home in Palm Bay, Florida, while Ethel and Ernie were on vacation. We saw more of each other when I moved to Palm Bay in 1996. It's worth noting that in October of this year, Ernie and Ethel celebrated their 67th wedding anniversary.

What I observed here in Palm Bay made me appreciate Ernie more than ever before. He was a fine administrator at the Bethesda Home and a sincere and dedicated worker in the church, where he was a deacon, where he helped serve the Lord's Supper, and helped take up the offering every Sunday. He directed the church choir and taught a Sunday School class in English every Sunday to residents of the Bethesda Home. He loved the Lord and served Him well. I feel sure that when Ernie met the Lord, He greeted Ernie with these words (or comparable words). "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the Kingdom of Heaven".

A packed sanctuary of relatives and friends celebrated the life of Ernest J. Kish on Friday, November 9, at the

Bethesda Baptist Church in Palm Bay. Rev. Denzel Alexander, the minister, conducted the funeral service and gave an uplifting message to those present. This was followed by inspiring words from Rev. Sandor Kulcsar from New York City, and Dr. Ladislau Biro, local retired former minister. The eulogy was given by Eugene Petre, Ernie's brother-in-law. Mr. Steve Szabo, from Chicago, spoke in detail about his personal experiences through the years with Ernie. He had high praise for his active life and indefatigable work for the Convention. The Hungarian Baptist Convention was represented by Rev. Sandor Kulcsar, president, Dr. Geza Herjeczki, vice-president, Mr. Steve Szabo, General secretary, and Mr. Louis Drescher, treasurer. The minister's wife, Weda Alexander, said "It is Well with My Soul".

The congregation joined in singing "When We All Get to Heaven, What a Day of Rejoicing That Will Be". This is the hymn which Ernie selected for the choir to sing on Sunday, November 4, the day before he died. Appropriate music was played on the organ for 2 hours before the service for the viewing with an open casket. The casket was then closed and was appropriately draped with the American flag, since Ernie was a veteran of the US Navy. Opportunity was given during the service for those who wished to express themselves in tribute to the life of Ernest J. Kish. Among those who spoke were, Louis Drescher, Margit Palotai, Zoltan Szabo and Gabriel Petre. Among the family the family members present at the funeral were Ethel and Ernie's son, Calvin, and his wife, Nancy, and also their daughter, Jessamyn, and her husband, Dan Bergin.

We who loved Ernie miss his presence among us, his smiling countenance and his willingness always to help wherever and whenever he was needed. Rev. Barton Brown, former minister here at Bethesda, had this to say about Ernest J. Kish, "He was the finest layman I have ever met. He was a Godly man". We can all agree with Rev. Brown and look forward to the day when we will greet each other again. "Rest in the Lord", Ernie.

Your sister—in-law,
Esther Petre Plyler

FUNERAL SERVICE FOR ERNIE KISH Palm Bay, FL – November 9, 2007

Dear Ethel, Calvin and beloved, grieving Family and Friends:

I am humbled and honored to be here as I express my sincere appreciation for the life and legacy of Brother Ernie Kish. I would like to convey the love, prayer support and sincere condolences of our Convention's constituents.

May you be comforted in your grief and strengthen the days ahead by Almighty God.

It always amazes me, that no matter who the person was, how long he or she have lived, how poor or rich he was, what social status he had, at the funeral service the earthly life-story of the person can be



The officers of the Hungarian Baptist Convention with Ethel and Calvin Kish by the open casket.

summed up in about one hour! Life goes on, and we live with the memories...

There is one exception to this. Think of the Lord Jesus, himself! His story is being told over and over again. That is why we are here together as brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Brother Ernie could truly personalize now the words of the Apostle Paul:

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, and I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day..." (2. Timothy 4:7-8)

We pause, standing around this casket, reflecting on a long life journey that started 89 years ago in Bridgeport, Connecticut. We think about the life of a godly man - **ERNIE KISH** - who faithfully fought and finished the race set before him by the Lord.

Today, he is a CHAMPION, waiting for his Crown in Glory!

The Hungarian Baptist Convention lost a great pillar, an exceptional servant, and a sacrificial supporter of the Hungar-

ian Baptist mission worldwide. I lost a good friend, whom I dearly loved, a wise counselor and co-laborer in our Convention.

He served in many different capacities in our Churches and Convention, as a Youth leader, a Band director, a Choir director, as a Sunday School teacher, an ordained deacon, a Retirement Home administrator, as Chairman of the Home and Finance Committee, Vice President, President, culminating in earning the title of the Honorary President. Brother Ernie loved the Lord, He loved His people and He loved the Convention, so much so, that even as an American-born Hungarian, He remained an active member - rarely missing the annual Convention or board meeting.

I repeatedly used the word "love", for He often admonished us from the Bible, using one of his favorite passages, the words of the apostle John, *to love God and love one another (1 John 4:7-11)*. His way of addressing us, the younger generation went like this: "FIAM" (*My son*), and he would go on with his good advices. I called Him on the phone many times; we would share our concerns and I received encouragement from him. He always finished the conversation with these words: "Steve, carry on! Love you!" - and then he would hang up the phone.

Once Ernie shared with me how he took the charge from the Convention's officers and ministers to *carry on* with the Convention's business, to take care of the Retirement Home after they will be gone... and he did - successfully and very profitably! This, and the next generation of Hungarian Baptists will enjoy the fruits of his hard work and sacrifice.

We thank God for Brother Ernie's life and legacy that will inspire us in our own different responsibilities. My prayer is this: Lord, as I look at the end of this man's life, and those who went before him, help me walk in their footsteps as they have walked in Your footsteps. Help us all to be faithful until the end.

May God bless and comfort us all with the living hope of reunion in Heaven.

Steve Szabo

CLEVELAND

Gyülekezeti életünk örömteli fénypontja volt szeptemberben *Boda Erika és András* újszülött kisleányának, *Rebekának* a bemutatása a vasárnap délelőtti istentisztelet keretében. *Pintér testvér* imádkozott a gyermekért és szüleiért. Aztán a nagyszülők, első unokájuk megérkezésének öröme

szeretetvendégséggel szolgáltak a gyülekezetnek az alagsori teremben.



Boda Rebeka bemutatása

Egy másik várva-várt alkalom is megérkezett novemberben. Két drága lélek fogadott örök hűséget Megváltójának: *Levi Jolán és Cséki István*. Miután bizonysgot tettek hitükről a



Pintér testvér beneríti Levi Jolánt, majd Cséki Istvánt



gyülekezet előtt, benerítette őket *Pintér testvér*. A mély tartalmú igehirdetést pedig *dr. Fazekas László* testvér véggezte. Ezután hálaadó napi megemlékezéssel zárult az összejövetel.

November 25-én vasárnap és az azt követő hétfő este kedves vendégünk volt: *Mike Sámuel* kecskeméti prédikátor testvér. Áldásos szolgálatában kiemelkedő volt a gyülekezet nevelése. Jellegzetes viselkedési módokat és hibákat világitott meg és buzdított a teljes szívből

való, igazi megbocsátásra. Testvérünk röviden beszámolt a *kecskeméti* misszió múltjáról és a mostani nagy vállalkozásukról, hogy napközi otthont kezdene. Ez lesz az első magyar baptista óvoda. A telek már megvan, tervbe vették egy új óvoda felépítését. Ez az óvoda lehetőséget ad majd gyermekeket az Úrhoz vezetni, sőt remélhető, hogy szüleit is. Sámuel testvér közvetlen, vidám modora, mosolygó tekintete, gitárral kísért énekei kedves emlék marad számunkra.

December 2-án újabb áldásban részesültünk Sámuel bátyja, *Mike József* testvér személyében, aki az Igével szolgált Róma 15:14-19 alapján. Hangsúlyozta, hogy ne csak passzív hallgatóként vegyünk részt a gyülekezeti alkalmakon, hanem aktívan vegyünk részt a szolgálatokban kitartással, örömmel és tiszta szívvel.

Még három este szolgált az Igével *Mike József* testvér közöttünk.

Marosi Béla

The Youth's Getaway to Mohican-Valley

by Beata & Anita Balla

During the second weekend in November (9-11), the youth had an opportunity to take a break from life and enjoy each other's presence at the Mohican Valley. Mohican is an excellent camping site where everyone enjoyed relaxing, bonding, and praising the Lord. We excitedly arrived Friday night and everyone enjoyed a delicious dinner. Afterward, we spent time talking, laughing, and praising the Lord through songs.

We began Saturday morning with prayer and reading the scripture. We read James 5: 19-20 which says if someone strays from the truth and one converts him, he that converted the sinner helped save his soul and hide a multitude of sins. We discussed that it's important to help and guide each other to walk on the narrow path, follow Jesus, and prevent others from straying into the wicked and sinful world. It is also very essential to walk by faith and help others do the same. After breakfast, we discussed our plan/events for Christmas and future youth group gatherings in which everyone had a chance to share their ideas. We then had some free time and then again enjoyed a delicious meal. After lunch, some people went swimming while others were relaxing and enjoying each other's company. After dinner, we had fun playing a variety of games that brought everyone closer together.

After breakfast on Sunday, we prayed and read from the bible. The scriptures that we read were from James 1: 1-13 in which we learned how to get wisdom