



*Budapest, Hungary viewed from the west side of the Danube River.*



## Kristen & Viktor Rózsa

Kristen & Viktor, one of ECC's most recent missionary couples, are engaged in a university ministry in Budapest where Viktor teaches both at Golgota Teológiai Főiskola where he is on the faculty in Practical Theology and the European Nazarene College in the Hungarian Learning Center where he teaches in Intercultural Studies.

Kristen started attending ECC with a friend when she was in elementary school. Later, she was involved in the youth group and experienced her first mission trip to Mexico with ECC. Kristen and Viktor were married at ECC and all three of their children have been dedicated here.

Viktor came to the US from Hungary, earned a BA at Ohio Christian University, met Kristen, and went on to earn a Master of Divinity at Asbury Seminary in 2012. Together, Kristen and Viktor support the church in Hungary through pastoral training and discipleship. Because of their cross-cultural marriage, family and experiences, God has used their family to help build bridges between international students and Hungarian communities.

The lack of materials and programming available for Christian leaders in Hungary is one of the main reasons Viktor pursued his undergraduate and graduate studies in the USA. His training has enabled him to challenge Hungarian Christians toward more global thinking regarding their own ministry situations.



*Kristen and Viktor with Lillian, Gabriella and Emily.*

## Why Hungary?

The people of Hungary have existed as a distinct population for over 2500 years. The Principality of Hungary emerged as a Christian kingdom upon the coronation of the first king, Stephen I, in 1000 A.D. For centuries, Hungary enjoyed a major role among the European nations in Central Europe. However, the nation's fate changed after the battle of Mohacs in 1526. Hungary was occupied by leaders faithful to foreign powers (Ottoman, Austrian, Russian) until 1989. As a Christian nation, Hungary enjoyed great spiritual freedom until the rise of communism after WWII. The Soviet liberation of the country brought spiritual devastation to the people of Hungary. Generations of people were raised without God in the second half of the 1900s. This produced not only an atheistic, secular, postmodern society but a nation whose search for meaning in life led to a hyper materialistic lifestyle. The beginning of the new millennia brought forth people in Hungary who were immune to Christianity.

Hungary is not culturally exempt from westernization and globalization. While Hungary is politically part of the European Union, there is an internal national identity movement that tries to return Hungary to its ethnic roots. Religiously speaking, Hungary has a population that identifies on paper as a majority Christian nation. The culture that claims to be Christian, however, seems to be in bad shape. Churches are empty on Sundays and people do very little of service in their communities. The self-absorbed ideology of climbing the ladder at one's workplace at the expense of building community is as real in Hungary as in any other part of the western world.

The most disturbing cultural reality is the hopelessness that exists in this nation at large. Hungarians are one of the world's most pessimistic people. They, especially the older ones, are suspicious of everything and everyone. The younger generations on the other hand would like to see a better future, one full of hope for them and their children. This is where the message of Christ through sharing the Good News with people can make a difference. Introducing people to the true way, truth, and life helps them see beyond the centuries of calamities their nation has endured and hope for a better future in Christ.



*Kristen sharing about her family at a summer English camp in Bonyhád, Hungary.*



*Golgota Teológiai Főiskola where Viktor teaches.*

## What's it like to Live and Teach in Hungary?

When asked what it is like to be an expat in Hungary, Kristen writes "I find the hardest part of being an expat in Hungary to be the language barrier. However, you will find so many people that know enough English to get by when the little amount of Hungarian that I use is not helpful! Besides the language, there are many other cultural ways of life that I've had to learn to navigate. So many of them I love and appreciate! For one, Hungarians really value children and family. We are considered a 'large' family by Hungarian standards, which always gets people interested in us when we are out and about.

I feel very much at ease with having my children around in any situation, because they are welcomed and received well. Strangers take responsibility for caring for and nurturing other children, so I rarely have to worry about their safety.

Hungary has a very formal culture in the sense that there is definitely an order to be kept and you must not disrupt the order/system. It is expected of everyone to remain relatively quiet, especially on public transportation. You are expected to greet everyone when entering an office or place of business, as well as say goodbye when you leave. This is also very common when walking through our town.

Hungarians are a quite suspicious people (due to so much political oppression and past history) and can be quite harsh in their interactions. However, once you get 'in' to their circles, they are very warm, caring and inviting. We've seen this play out a lot with putting our kids into the Hungarian schools. It has really broken down a lot of barriers for our family in our community. It's also very foreign for Hungarians to gather in each other's homes. They often find it quite strange that we invite them for playdates or meals, but it really changes our relationships as they begin to fellowship together in our home.

We love the public transportation system and rely on it heavily in Budapest. We can easily take a bus to the city and then use the trams, metros, buses, to get around (the girls love this part!). However, because we live just outside the city and have three small kiddos to transport (and often guests), we do use our own car to drive to the park, ride to areas of Budapest and then use the public transportation to get around. Driving in the city takes a lot of courage! We feel very safe here in Hungary. Violent crime is almost non-existent. We do have to be careful about pickpocketing and burglaries.

Sometimes people will ask me what my biggest frustration or bother is about living in Hungary. My first answer is usually the inefficiency that we usually face—especially when it comes to anything official. It can take businesses, the government, schools, etc., years to accomplish an official task that seems relatively easy to complete. In fact, it's been said that there actually isn't a best term in Hungarian for the word 'efficient' in the English language. The other thing that bothers me the most is that the months of November thru January are often very dark and gloomy, in addition to this, the time change makes it dark by 4pm every day! If you can make it through these months, Hungary proves to be a beautiful place to live and visit."



*Kristen and Viktor's home just outside Budapest.*

Teaching undergraduates is also a bit different in Hungary than in the US. Viktor notes that "When teaching Hungarians, the educational philosophy from American Christian schools seem to surprise them. Students expect lectures and they are used to not allowing for dialogue or asking further questions related to the subject studied at hand. There are times when students do not know how to respond to being treated as colleagues in theological studies. Mutual studying in a classroom setting is a foreign concept in Hungary. I help students to learn a new way of connecting not only with me but also with one another. This fosters an environment of collaboration and provides a support system for the future so that students can learn from one another in a specially designed web that supports their calling and service in various ministries. "

## Family Ministry

As Kristen and Viktor with their children interact with the International Student Ministry through their church in Hungary, they see the global church interacting at the local level. There are many Hungarians who know little about God and it is their international Christian brothers and sisters who help their faith to grow. They count it a joy, honor and privilege to serve with the International Student Ministry. This small group of students is very missional in their

understanding of their fellowship and they invite both Hungarian and other international students to study, share and strengthen each other on a weekly basis. The students are thirsty for authentic and honest community. This family ministry is something that they work hard to maintain, and they encourage others to do the same. They have seen students from all continents participate and find it interesting to see how they shape those Hungarians with whom they come into contact.



*Table fellowship with international students at Kristen and Viktor's home.*

## From the Rózsa's Kitchen

### Chicken Paprikas Recipe

**Servings: 4**

#### Ingredients

- 2 1/2 lbs. chicken cut into 2-inch pieces
- 1 tbsp. olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 tomato, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tbsp. marjoram
- 1 tsp. mustard
- 2 tbsp. Hungarian paprika (sweet)
- 2 1/2 tbsp. all-purpose flour
- 2 cups (480 ml) of water
- 2/3 cup (70 ml) sour cream for garnishing
- salt and pepper to taste

#### Directions

Using a large skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add the onions and garlic; cook until soft. Add the tomatoes and cook for 2-3 minutes. Add the paprika but make sure to stir constantly (paprika tastes bitter if it burns). Almost immediately add the chicken pieces, the marjoram, mustard, and stir until it is all well mixed together. Gradually stir in the water and bring to a boil and continue stirring. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Cover and simmer gently for 30 minutes or until the chicken is cooked through. Add flour and stir for 2 minutes while constantly stirring (this step could be skipped for a lighter meal). You can stir in the sour cream at this point or serve it on the side as a garnish option to make it dairy-free. Simmer it for 5 more minutes.

Arrange chicken on a large platter and spoon sauce over and around it. Serve with nokedli (dumplings) and sour cream and Hungarian cucumber salad on the side.