

BRETHREN IN EUROPE

VISION FOR CHURCH PLANTING AND GROWTH

On 1 July leaders from Brethren churches in 24 countries in Europe agreed a declaration to stimulate and encourage their work in Europe.

[165] leaders came together at the Missionshaus-Bibelschule Wiedenest for a two-day conference on 30 June – 1 July. They considered the spiritual needs of Europe, the progress of Bible-believing Christianity, the nature of the task that the Lord has given them, and – in particular – the needs of church planting and growth.

The main speakers were John Lennox (UK) (*Analysis, perspective and vision for Europe and our task*), Fares Marzone (Italy) (*The Brethren movement in Europe: roots, identity and the future*), and Gerd Goldman (Germany) (*Stimulating church growth in Germany – a report on recent work in Germany to stimulate church growth and church planting*).

The conference agreed a declaration designed to encourage practical steps in the different countries to press on with the work of evangelism and church planting.

Fares Marzone said, “Though there have been earlier international conferences for the Brethren in Europe, this was the first conference for some time, and the first that deliberately tried to bring together representatives from every country in which we believe there are churches connected in some way with the Brethren movement. Almost all were able to send representatives. I think that all found that it was an inspiration to be at the conference, to share fellowship, and encourage one another in our work. We became conscious again of the scale of Brethren churches and their work across the continent.”

Gerd Goldmann, the Chief Executive of the Missionshaus-Bibelschule Wiedenest, added, “We were delighted to host the conference. Immediately afterwards, we celebrated the 100th anniversary of the work of Wiedenest, which was founded in Berlin in 1905, particularly to train people for outreach in eastern Europe and Russia. Some of the churches which were represented at the conference are very much the fruit of the original inspiration for evangelism and church planting. These are just as necessary today, and we want to see positive results from the conference. We hope that the churches will take up the declaration, both in Europe and elsewhere.”

Notes to editors

1. The declaration is attached
2. Also attached is a list of the countries represented at the conference.
3. It is planned that there should be a printed record of the conference should be published as soon as possible. This will include material from the addresses and a summary of the country reports.
4. Three conferences were held in succession at Wiedenest:
 - a. The Brethren in Europe Conference: Vision for Europe: Church Planting and Church Growth (30 June 1 July)
 - b. Wiedenest's 100th anniversary celebration
 - c. The Second International Brethren History Conference (3 – 6 July). The first part of this conference looked particularly at the influence of Wiedenest and some of its leaders in the last 100 years.
5. The Brethren in Europe Conference is a regional conference for national leaders in churches connected with the Brethren movement. Similar regional conferences have been held in Africa (the Pan-African Brethren Conference on Missions) and in the Far East (the Asia-Pacific Conference on Missions). A conference for the Caribbean area is to be held in Bermuda in October 2006 and a sub-regional conference is to be held in East Africa in December 2005 (the Great Lakes Conference). A global conference for Brethren leaders (the International Brethren Conference on Missions - IBCM) is

held regularly. The IBCM4 conference is to be held at Wiedenest, Germany, on 25 June – 1 July 2007. (For further information about these conferences, contact Neil Summerton (summerto@hornsey.u-net.com)).

6. The planning group are looking at the possibility of organising a further Brethren in Europe Conference in 2009.

**COUNTRIES REPRESENTED AT THE BROTHERS IN EUROPE CONFERENCE
30 JUNE – 1 JULY 2005**

Austria
Belgium
Bosnia
Bulgaria
Czech Republic
Denmark
Estonia
Faroe Islands
France
Germany
Hungary
Iceland
Italy
Netherlands
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Serbia and Montenegro
Slovakia
Spain
Switzerland
Turkey
Ukraine
United Kingdom

There were also participants from the following countries:

Brazil
New Zealand
Pakistan
Tanzania
Zambia