



Love Bulgaria – From Idea to Reality!



Love Bulgaria - Youth Evangelism Conference 2008

What started as a dream in the summer of 2007 became reality in the summer of 2008. An international youth evangelism training conference that brought students and leaders from several countries together to see teens trained in sharing their faith called "Love Bulgaria".

"Love Bulgaria was the first of we hope will be a yearly event in Bulgaria" – states Al Mellinger – FMWM Missionary and co-director of this event. "The fact that we had students and leaders from the United States, Britain, Bulgaria and a few from Greece was amazing for the first time trying this." With over 200 in attendance it exceed the goal of the organizers. It also identified the desire students have to share their relationship with God with others if shown how.

"Love Bulgaria" was a conference sponsored by Free Methodist World Missions (FMWM), Missions Possible Bulgaria (MPB) and the Renewal International Network (A US based group, a Bulgarian based group and a UK based group). These organizations are committed to the churches in Bulgaria and know that helping the youth grow in their





faith and commitment to Christ will strengthen the church for the long haul.

The goal was to prepare people (and in this case teens) in ways to share their faith and by doing so show God's Love. The key scripture comes from

1 Peter 3:15 **But set Christ apart as Lord** in your hearts and **always be ready to give an answer about the hope you possess.**

"We wanted people to know how to share God's plan (the Hope) with people, as they



live for Jesus" added Mellinger.

The teaching team consisted of youth workers from Bulgaria, England and the United States. Each of the main sessions was delivered in both English and Bulgarian. The fact that the material was relevant in both languages, communicated how the gospel message transcends time and culture.

There were also workshops that showed creative ways to share the gospel in unique ways: from Street Drumming, and Music to Kids Programs and Dance. There were options for all and all in attendance learned something from the time.

"We worked hard at having key teachers from different countries to show that the Message goes beyond culture and countries and that we can learn from each other" shared Mellinger. "We

did not want this to be seen as the church in the west coming in doing it all."



One of the exciting features was a youth group from the states that came not only to be part of the conference but also to partner with Bulgarian Youth to reach Bulgarians for a few days following the actual training. Not working out as first planned God still worked in amazing ways to encourage and strengthen the churches and the students involved.



2008 Team from Spring Arbor, Michigan & other parts of America and Great Britain.

They were assisted by 7 other Americans and 1 from England and a host of Bulgarian translators.

Prepared with a pantomime and their testimonies, they communicated what it meant to share their faith in real and personal ways. Organizing and running Kids programs and evening rallies with local groups gave these churches a needed boost.

Another Love Bulgaria conference is planned for next summer. No other details are yet available but if any youth groups are interested in being a part of this kind of event in the future contact Al Mellinger – almellinger@yahoo.com.

