



MINTS and the Union of Congregational Churches-Bulgaria

On the 4th of October I flew back to the UK from preaching in the US. On 6th October I flew to Sofia, Bulgaria, to deliver the first lectures in our new center in Bulgaria.

Last year MINTS entered into an agreement to train leaders of the Union of Congregational Churches in Bulgaria, which was founded in the late 1800's by American Congregational ministers. The union was persecuted first by the Orthodox Church and then by the ruling authorities during the Soviet occupation. By God's grace and the calling of faithful men it survived. Many of the leaders in this period were untrained and Arminian and after the end of communism the church reflected. Over the last few years the leadership has changed and last year they approached us and asked for training in the Reformed Faith. After a year of planning, the training has begun.

The evening of the 6th was spent in Sofia with the local coordinator. The next morning we left at 6:30 to travel to Velingrad, a town 2 hours away in the mountains. I was encouraged to see 24 men, representing about 60% of the

ministers and leaders of the Union. Using a translator, we lectured for 15 hours on the Friday and Saturday; we had made sure that the material was already translated before we arrived, making the whole lecture process easier. I felt the lectures went well. On Sunday I had the opportunity to preach in the central church in Sofia. I was encouraged to see the church was full to overflowing, with 170 or so in attendance.

After lecturing and preaching, I also had the chance to spend time talking informally to the leaders in the church about particular issues they face. It also allowed us to plan how MINTS could adapt our material to be more useful to them. We hope that MINTS can assist them as they move forward.

Our next lecture is in November when Dr. Don Ritzman will be teaching on the Pentateuch. The center will then break for winter and in the spring Will Traub will teach Systematic Theology One. We will also have a course on the Westminster Confession and our fifth course will be on the early Church Fathers, an important topic in Eastern Europe which is influenced by the Orthodox Church.

All our lectures are fully written out and are being translated into Bulgarian. We are seeking to invest in the future of the Reformed Faith in Bulgaria in the Union and beyond. The best way to do this is to create a body of Reformed literature in Bulgarian and our aim is that in four years time we will have introductory material in each main area of study. The material will be available to all Bulgarians on the internet. I gather there is now a new Bulgarian section on Sermon Audio. The lectures and translation have also been video taped and will be available online. Interestingly, Bulgaria has one of the fastest internet services in Europe, between 50 and 100 Mbs. The church there is using all the tools at its disposal to promote the Reformed faith. If anyone wants to watch it I have a very short report from the local MINTS Coordinator who is also the secretary of the Union, just click on the Link below. It is in English.

<http://www.youtube.com/user/BelizeFPS?blend=1&ob=5>

Please continue to pray for and support this work. We are looking forward to seeing what God will do in the Bulgarian church over the next generation.

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