



INTERNATIONAL BRETHERN CONFERENCE ON MISSION 4 25 JUNE - 1 JULY 2007

NEWS RELEASE

LARGEST, MOST SUCCESSFUL IBCM CONFERENCE SO FAR

- *A very encouraging and exciting time to be with brothers and sisters from around the world worshipping the Lord together*
- *Many significant relationships were initiated or kindled during this time*
- *a profound pleasure and rejuvenating experience...discovering that God is powerfully at work around the world...is a breath of fresh air*
- *[I am] still pondering on the thoughts that were raised... It has taken me to the next level of faith*
- *a memorable conference where the Lord was honoured and glorified*
- *Surely this tremendous experience of such an international fellowship in the Lord has made a precious impact on the lives of everyone*
- *the conference is getting bigger and better each time*
- *All my expectations were exceeded...*
- *It's been such a blessing, within the frame of an outstanding organization*
- *I could learn many lessons, many things as a challenge, even as a warning.*
- *You may not know how you impacted our lives and ministry but we know, and we just give glory to our great God*
- *one of the best conferences that I have ever attended*

These are some of the many comments which have been made about the fourth IBCM conference (though one or two people have expressed reservations about certain aspects of the conference).

The conference was held on 25 June - 1 July at the Missionshaus-Bibelschule Wiedenest, east of Cologne in Germany. It brought together leaders from the Brethren movement from a wide variety of different countries and areas.

There were 409 participants from 77 countries or distinct areas. Places as diverse as Alaska, Greenland, the Andaman Islands, Madagascar, Jordan and Nepal were represented, as well countries where there are very large numbers of Brethren churches, like Angola, Argentina, Zambia, Chad and India.

Fares Marzone of Italy, Chairman of the IBCM International Planning Group, says: *'We cannot thank our German hosts enough for all their hospitality and efforts on behalf of the conference. What they did for us was outstanding.*

' We must also thank the participants for the trouble, time and effort that they took to come to the conference, and all that they contributed to it, both in the formal sessions and the informal discussions that took place. We believe that there will be lasting benefit from the conference, in area conferences in different parts of the world, but also in collaboration between different groups of individuals and bodies within and between countries.

'For me, the keynotes of the conference were:

- **Hope** - *for secularized societies, in the example of a blind evangelist intent on reaching a largely closed country ,in countries where churches are in decline, or where doors seem closed to the gospel*
- **Vision** - *where believers are risking their lives for the gospel and to do good in the face of war, natural disaster, famine, poverty, oppression and persecution*
- **Perseverance** - *particularly where there is discouragement and little liberty for the gospel.*

'The faith and inventiveness which many of our churches show in different places is itself an encouragement.'

The theme of the conference was 'by all means to win some' (1 Cor. 9: 22). In a final address, Dr Gerd Goldmann, the leader of the work of Wiedenest, identified twelve challenges emerging from the conference, all of them relating to effective evangelism. Among them, he noted the importance of partnership and networking, of involvement in society and social action, and of the need to make the gospel relevant both within particular cultures and in cross-cultural outreach.

It was announced that the International Planning Group expected, DV, to organise an IBCM5 conference, to take place in the year 2011. They are in discussion with a number of countries which are possible locations for the conference. An announcement will be made once a decision has been taken.

Notes for editors

1. The Brethren movement in the following countries was represented at the conference, normally by nationals but in a few cases by expatriate missionaries:

Albania, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Barbados, Belgium (Flanders and Wallonia), Bermuda, Bolivia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Brazil, Burundi, Canada, Chad, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cuba, Czech Republic, Ethiopia, Faroe Islands, France, Germany, Greenland, Hungary, India (including the Andaman and Nicobar Islands), Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Korea, Laos, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mexico, Moldova, Montenegro, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Rumania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Sudan, Switzerland, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom (England, Wales and Scotland), Ukraine, Uruguay, United States of America (including Alaska), and Zambia.

Participants had planned to come from a number of other countries (including the Republic of Congo (Congo-Brazzaville), Guyana, Kazakhstan, Mozambique, and United Arab Emirates) but were prevented from doing so, mainly by difficulties in obtaining visas.

There are churches connected with the Brethren movement in upwards of 100 countries in the world - the exact number is not known.

2. *The Brethren Movement Worldwide: Key Information* was published for the conference. Edited by Dr Harold Rowdon (UK), this contains information relating to 61 countries (including some not represented at the conference). It is hoped to publish a revised edition later in 2007, which will include reports on a number of additional countries. Copies of *The Brethren Movement Worldwide* can be obtained from the conference organisers (see below for contact details).

3. A MP3 including conference addresses and other material from the conference is available (contact: neil.summerton@ruralinternet.co.uk).

4. The official conference photograph should soon be available on the IBCM website (www.ibcm.net). (It is not included with the press release, as some recipients in certain countries are not able to receive large electronic files.)

5. A number of regional discussions took place in the course of the conference. It is proposed to hold a second Pan-African Brethren Conference on Missions in Zambia in 2009 (contact: Kelvin Samwata [sgmzam@zamnet.zm]), and conferences in the Asia-Pacific region, in the Caribbean and for Portuguese-speaking countries are being planned as a result of discussion at the IBCM4 conference.

6. A special meeting discussed a report on work to development a Brethren Information Network, and a Brethren Educational Network (www.benrff.org), since the IBCM3 conference in 2003. Notes of this meeting will shortly be available on the IBCM website (www.ibcm.net) and on the Brethren Education Network website (www.benrff.org). It was agreed to form international steering groups to carry forward the development of these two projects.

7. The IBCM conferences are prepared by an International Planning Group (IPG) which comprises Fares Marzone (Chairman - Italy), Neil Summerton (UK - Secretary), Kelvin Samwata (Zambia), Reynald Kozycki (France) and Paul Joshua (India). Paul Gerhard Kalthoff (Germany) and Dr Ken Newton (Australia) have now stood down from membership of the IPG after many years. The IPG wishes to record its thanks to them for all that they have done to develop the IBCM series of conferences. The IPG is considering one or two additional appointments. The IPG is supported by an International Advisory Group which is consulted electronically (the membership is given on the IBCM website (www.ibcm.net)).

8. The IBCM4 Conference was planned in conjunction with a German National Committee representing the various branches of the Brethren movement in Germany and chaired by Dr Gerd Goldmann of Missionshaus-Bibelschule Wiedenest.

9. Representatives in countries not represented at IBCM4, and who would like more details, are invited to make contact with neil.summerton@ruralinternet.co.uk

10. Financial support to enable attendance at the conference was given by a number of organisations and individuals in a number of different countries. The conference would not have been possible without this support.

Contacts: IPG Chairman (Fares Marzone): preside@ibei.it
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