

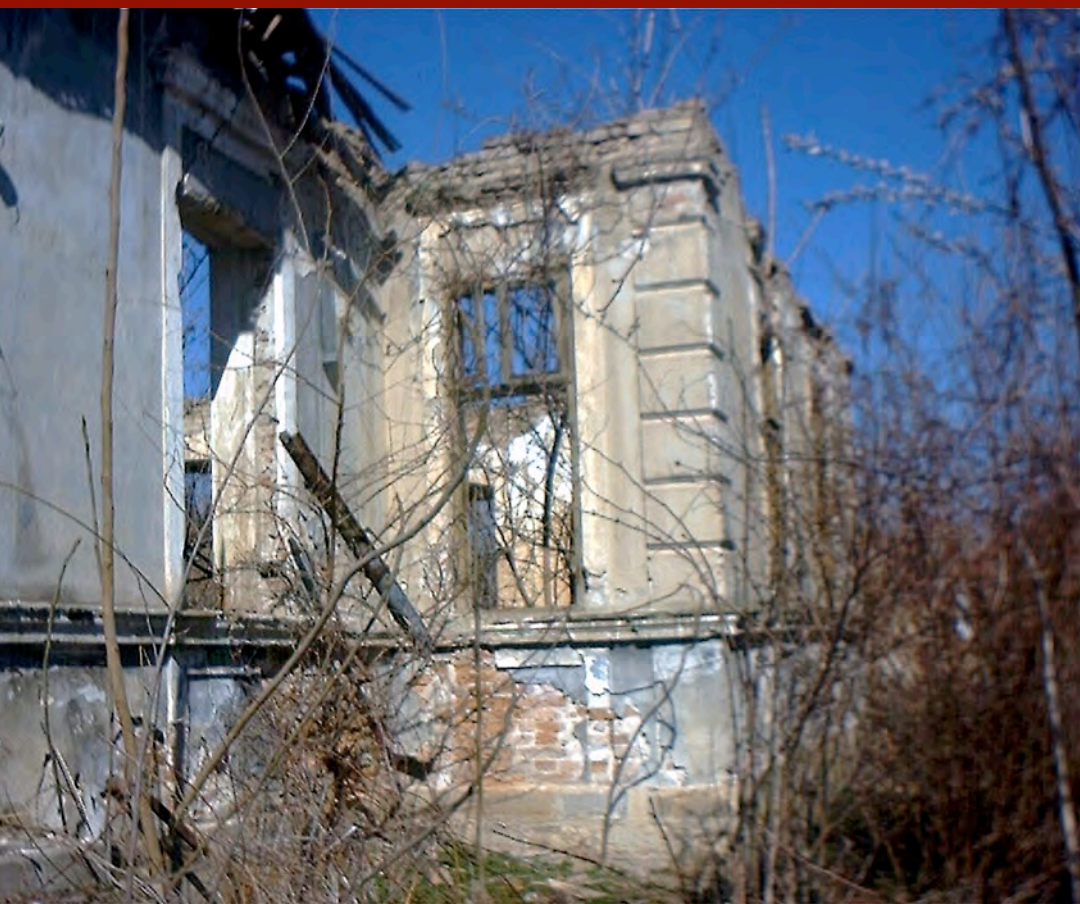


The Story of a Dream



The United Methodist
Church in Bulgaria
1990-2010

Ruins After the Communist Regime 1990



Strahilovo



Shumen

Ruins After the Communist Regime 1990

Lovech - from the outside



Pleven

Lovech - from the inside



Lovech

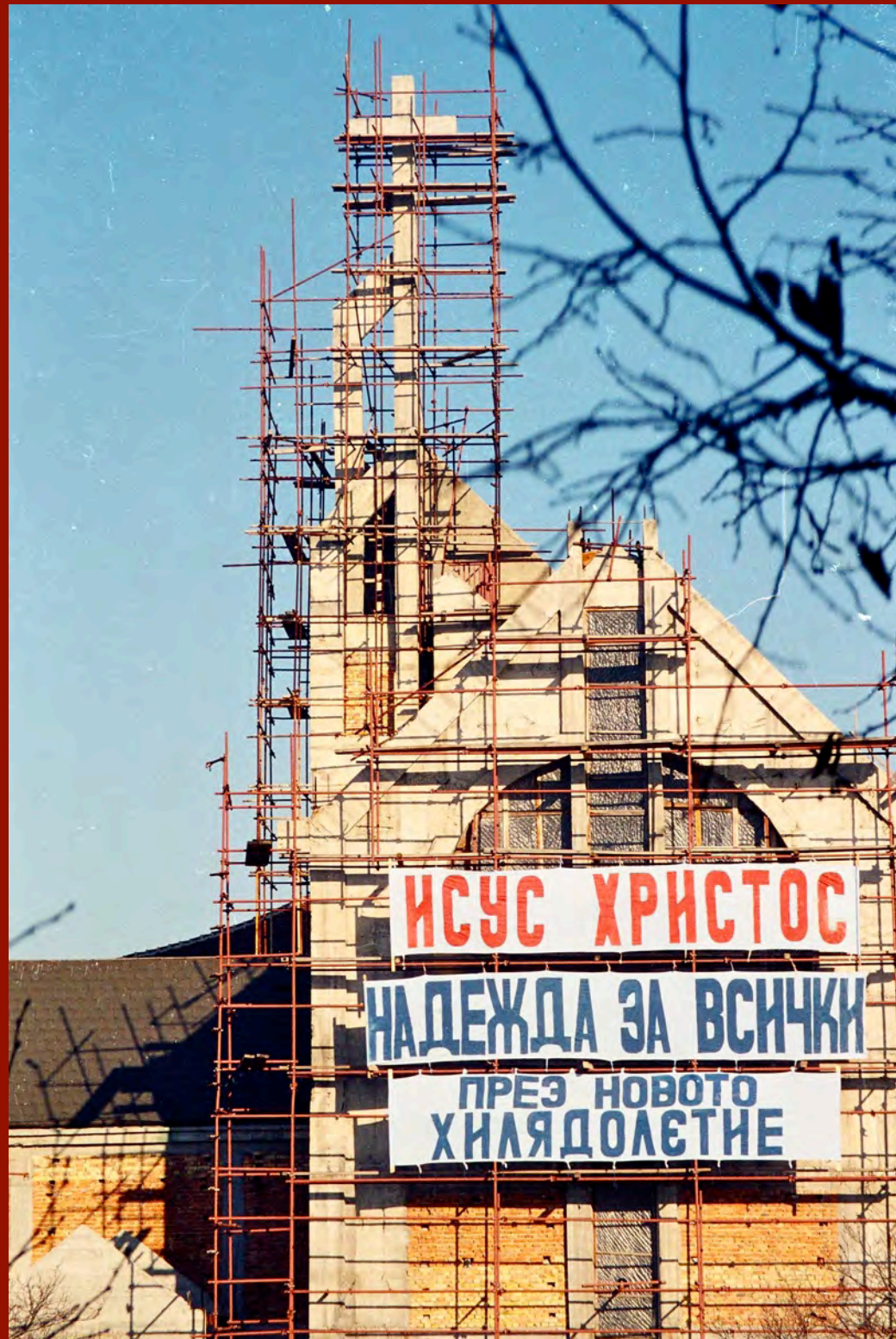




The resurrected Church

«Jesus Christ,
Hope
for everyone!»

The message
of the banned
Methodist
churches
building Project
in Varna



Dedication

“Blessed be the Lord, Who has not given us as prey to their teeth!
The snare is broken, and we have escaped! Our help is in the name of the Lord!”

Psalm 124

In memory of the late fathers of faith, who have prepared us
for the mission of the future!



Simeon Popov

Methodist pastor and the 1947 Annual Conference Secretary. Irreconcilable champion for preserving the Methodist Church, a faithful minister of the church till the end of his life.



Ilija Iliev

Methodist pastor. He continued to serve the church after his release from prison. Dedicated and committed, with a strong spirit. An example and encouragement for the following generations.

In memory of the late fathers of faith, who have prepared us
for the mission of the future!

Walter Tlach

Pastor, part of the Pietist movement in Germany. Dean of Tübingen, stern opponent of liberal theology. Connected with the Methodist Church during the Communist regime.

Garro Altunjan

Pastor and evangelist. While the pastors were in prison, he took over their ministry. Faithful to the Methodist Church, he served as a pastor for 40 years till the end of his life.



Dedication

This is an attempt to make an account of the rapid growth of the Methodist Church in Bulgaria for the last 20 years.

The few remnant members of our old churches passed away soon after the changes. New people came into the Church.

The history of the Methodist Church does not begin with us, nor will it end with us, but we have the privilege of being part of it and making a modest contribution.

I dedicate this to all pastors and preachers, to the martyrs of the Church, to all who remained faithful during the difficult years.

Bedros Altunian

The Methodist Church 1857 - 1946

The beginning of the Methodist Church in Bulgaria can be traced back to 1857.

American missionaries came to Bulgaria in the years of the Ottoman rule. They were not only clergy, but served also as teachers and educators. They contributed also to the Bulgarian National Revival.

Dr Albert Long held the first worship service in Bulgarian language on Christmas Eve 1859 in the city of V. Tarnovo. At the time the Orthodox Church was holding its services in Greek. People were eager to listen to the Word of God in a language they could understand. The missionaries translated the Bible into Bulgarian, thus putting an end to the language debate and establishing the literary Bulgarian language.

The first Annual Conference was held in Russe in the Fall of 1876, during the most difficult time after the crushing of the April uprising. In those difficult years towards the end of the Turkish dominion, there were 8 active churches.

A successful growth of the Methodist Church followed. There were 45 churches until 1946.

The Methodist Church 1947 - 1990

With the establishment of the Communist regime the pastors were convicted and thrown in prison. Many churches were closed and later their buildings were taken away.

The Methodist Church was destroyed. The names of pastors from the distant past were entirely forgotten. Today they must come out of oblivion.



A long period of persecution and destruction of the Church followed.

Only 3 churches remained: Shumen, Russe, Hotantsa.

Faithful to their ministry in the Church were the following pastors:

Simeon Popov, Ilija Iliev,
Georgi Nalbantski, Garo Altunian.



The Methodist Church 1947 - 1990

Convicted pastors of the Methodist Church

Simeon Popov

Gavrail Tsvetanov

Ilija Iliev

Georgi Sivriev

Zdravko Bezlov

Vasil Zjapkov

Marin Gluharov

Simeon Iliev

Vasil Marinov

Nikola Pulev

Spas Miloshev

Janko Ivanov



Beginning of the Revival - 1990

Democratic changes in Bulgaria

The elderly pastor Simeon Popov convened in March a meeting of the survived Methodists.

Delegates from Sofia, Varna, Shumen.

It was decided:

To invite Bishop Bolleter from Zurich.

To register a Church Council.

To resist all attempts of seizing the Dr. Long church in Sofia.



Beginning of the Revival - 1990

The visit of Bishop Heinrich Bolleter and Wilhelm Nausner - Central Conference Secretary

This is the first visit of a Methodist Bishop to Bulgaria after a 46-years ban.

Bishop Bolleter reinstated the Bulgarian Conference at the Board of the United Methodist Church. The Methodist Church came back to life and became part of the big UMC family.

First steps:

New Superintendent was appointed: Zdravko Bezlov.

Renovation of the Dr Long church building.

Return of some of the properties in Sofia: two shops and oan apartment.



Ordination of pastors:

Bozhidar Popov

Bedros Altunjan

Danail Nalbantski



Sup. Zdravko Bezlov

Restoration of the Conference - 1993

New Superintendent

After the sudden demise of Sup. Zdravko Bezlov in March, 1993, Bishop Heinrich Bolleter appointed a

Superintendent - Bedros Altunjan and set before him the task of preparing the first Annual Conference of the restored Church in Bulgarian.



Sup. Bedros Altunian

After a 46-years of interruption

Bishop Heinrich Bolleter convened the First (41st) Annual Conference of the Methodist Church on 09.02.1993 in Russe.





Attended by:

6 pastors ,

5 lay-preachers,

13 lay people,

11 guests

The Superintendent submitted to the Annual Conference a report for the 46-years since the last Annual Conference, held in Lovech in 1947.

Decisions of the First Annual Conference:

New By-laws.

A Church Council was elected.

Restoration of the old churches and establishing new ones.

To edit a Bible version in contemporary Bulgarian language.

Translation of the Discipline and the Liturgy.

Restoration of the Old Churches

Second (42nd) Annual Conference - Sofia 1994



Churches:

8 churches altogether.

New churches:

Aksakovo, Tsenovo,
Varna-Armenian.

Dedication of the Dr Long church

The successful Annual Conference ended with a solemn dedication.

Bishop Heinrich Bolleter introduced to state officials and to the public the new image of the renewed Bulgarian Methodist Church.

Returned properties:

The pastor's home - Pleven.

Plots of land: Strahilovo, Podem.

Fields: Voivodovo, Hotantsa.

The building of a church in Varna started.

Restoration of the Old Churches

Third (43rd) Annual Conference - Lovech 1995

Dedication of the Lovech



After a lot
of efforts
the church
was given back
in this condition



The UMC Lovech
today

Churches - 14
New: Pleven,
Voivodovo,
Varna 2, Djulino,
Lovech, St.Orjahovo.





Restoration of the Old Churches

Fourth (44th) Annual Conference

Shumen 1996

Dedication of the Shumen church

The dedication of the church was a celebration of God's faithfulness.

For years the authorities had wanted to pull down the church because of the hotel which was being built next door.

Nowadays the church is extended by 4m - with an extra window extended in the direction of that very hotel.



Churches - 14 altogether

New: V. Turnovo, Balchik, Russe-Armenian, Bozveliysko, Burgas-Pobeda, Gorno Ezerovo

Restoration of the Old Churches

Fifth (45th) Annual Conference - Hotantsa 1997



Purchased properties: Tsenovo, Burgas-Pobeda,
Shumen - a plot of land for a Social Center

Dedication of the Hotantsa church



Churches - 22 altogether:
New: Provadia, Dolen Chiflik



Sevlievo



Mizija

New property - Aksakovo - a house.

New Churches

Sixth (46th) Annual Conference

Sofia 1998

Dobrich



Churches - 29 altogether:

New churches: Dobrich, Mizija,
Trastenik, Sevlievo, Burgas-Armenian,
Osenovo, Dalgopol-Turkish.

New Churches

Seventh (47th) Annual Conference - Varna 1999



Dedication in Burgas-Pobeda

Minority church in a neighborhood with severe social problems.



New Churches

Dedication in Staro Oriahovo



New Churches

Eight (48th) Annual Conference - Russe 2000



Ljaskovets

Purchased houses:

Sevlievo, Dobrich, Mizija,
Provadija, Burgas-G.Ezerovo,



Yambol

Churches - 30 altogether.

New church: Yambol

New Churches

Ninth (49th) Annual Conference - Shumen 2001

Dedication in Tsenovo

Dedication of the Social Center
in Shumen



New properties:
plots in D. Chiflik, Trastikovo



Churches - 31 altogether

New church: Pchelnik -Turkish

New Churches

Tenth (50th) Annual Conference - Varna 2002

Dedication in Varna

A national competition for a project in 1992, directed by Wilhelm Nausner.

The construction began in 1994. It was suspended for 6 years in total.

Dedicated on September 28, 2002.



The message of the suspended building project: Word of hope...



New Churches

...and deeds of mercy!



Soup kitchen for the suspended church building in Varna.



New Churches

Elevenht (51st) Annual Conference - Dobrich 2003

Dedication in Dobrich



Children were building



Women were digging
the foundations



New Churches

Open to all



Together with children from the orphanage

New plots:
Botevgrad, Varna-Turkish,
Trastenik, Grozdevo



Churches - 36 altogether
New church: Svishtov

New Churches

Twelfth (52nd) Annual Conference - Russe 2004



Dedication in Voivodovo



Dedication in Osenovo



New Churches

Twelfth (52nd) Annual Conference - Russe 2004

Dedication of the organ in Varna



Bishop Bolleter

Saby Heny - one of the sponsors

Jens Steinhoff - who built the organ

New Churches

Thieteenth (53rd) Annual Conference - Varna 2005

New Bishop

In March 2005 the Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe elected in the city of Bern a new Bishop: Dr Patrick Streiff

He is a church historian, until recently he was serving as a pastor of a church and a lecturer in a Methodist Seminary.

He accepted to serve in a very “mixed” Diocese: 14 countries, 7 Annual Conferences, where services are held in over 20 languages.

We wish him a lot of strength and abundant blessings!



New Churches

Fourteenth (54th) Annual Conference - Shumen 2006

Dedication in Botevgrad



New plots:

Yambol, Burgas-Pobeda

New Churches

Fifteenth (55th) Annual Conference - Dobrich 2007

Dedication of the Varna - Turkish



New properties: Church in Svishtov
Thorough renovation of the pastor's
house in Sevlievo and Shumen.



New Churches

Sixteenth (56th) Annual Conference Sofia 2008

Dedication in V. Turnovo



New Churches

Dedication in Dolni Chiflik



New Churches

Seventeenth (57th) Annual Conference - V.Tarnovo 2009

150 Anniversary of the Bulgarian Methodist Church

Bible translators

Dr. Albert Long



Hristodul Sechanov, Elias Riggs,
Albert Long, Petko R. Slavejkov



On Christmas Eve, 1859, he held the first
worship service in Bulgarian language

The First Conference 1876



D.Challis, A.Long, F.Flocken, E.Launsbery
Standing: J.Tsekov, T.Nashev, D.Mateev, G.Iliev,
J.Dimitriev, St.Genchev, N.Vojnov, T.Nikolaus

New Churches

Eighteenth (58th) Annual Conference - Russe 2010

Dedication in Trastikovo





Dedication UMC Trastikovo



Евангелска Методистка
Епископална Църква
основана в България 1859 г.
Богослужения:
Неделя и сряда - 17.00 ч.

Evangelization

“Everyone needs of Christ!”

Ever since the democratic changes in 1990 we have the freedom to preach the Word of God, to gather new congregations, to build churches. We are grateful for the support of

“Zeltmission” (the Tent Mission) and of the partner churches.

For many years we have been successful in our mission by using the “Jesus” film. Such a presentation of the Gospel is still having an effect on people. The UMC-Bus and Tent Mission are well accepted.

People are ready to listen to our message.



“Everyone needs of Christ!”

We are eagerly preaching the Gospel to various groups outside the church: people in the street, in hospitals, two prisons.

Many people accepted the invitation which led to the restoration of some of the older congregation and the establishing of new ones.



Evngelism in Ressen



The Lord's Supper administered
at the D. Chiflik construction site

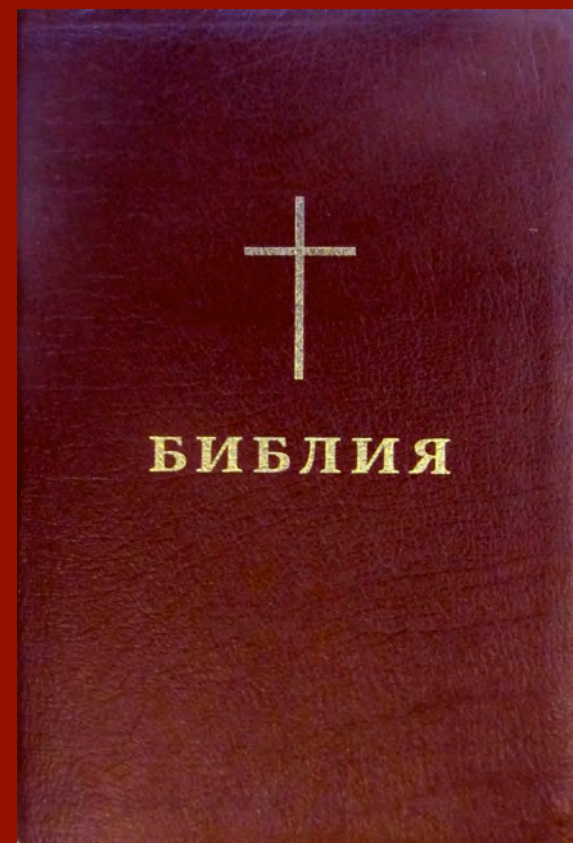
Translations and Publications

For the last 50 years Christian literature was banned and persecuted in Bulgaria.

There was a great need for the distribution of the Bible in a contemporary language. There was lack of Hymnals and theological books.

One of the first tasks that we were facing was a new revision of the Bible.

That lasted for 10 years. The text was accepted by the rest of the Protestant churches and has been published by the Bible Society ever since the year 2000.

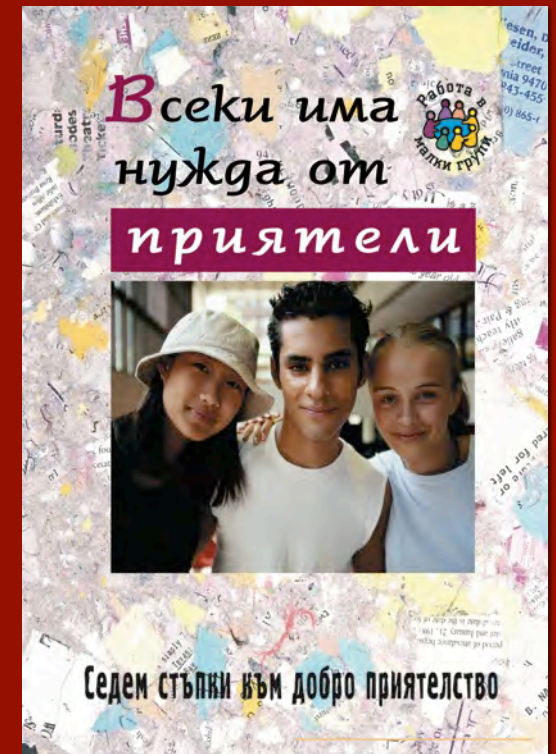


Within a short time Wesley's "Sermons" and "Notes on the New Testament" were translated as well as the Liturgy and the Discipline.

More than 40 theological books have been translated and published:

"On the Road with Christ", "Living Grace", Tsvetan Litov's Sermons – 3 volumes, Simeon Popov's Sermons – 2 volumes, numerous materials for small group studies, books on other relevant topics.

Various study materials were also published: "Steps of Faith", quarterly guide for Sunday School teachers, "Sunday Helper". Forty interesting DVD films were translated.



Social Activities

Immediately after 1990 many people who needed help came to our churches. We were distributing among them the humanitarian help of medications, foods, clothing that we had received.

“The Merciful Samaritan” Social Center - Shumen

UMC Weiblingen were the first to offer help. They were the ones to initiate the building of the Social Center in Shumen which consists of a canteen, a hospital and a home for elderly people.

The Center has already been functioning effectively for 10 years. Its self-support is increasing these last years.



Social Activities

Soup kitchen in Varna

In the beginning there were soup kitchens in some of the churches.

Each winter in Varna 150 poor people receive warm food.

The soup kitchen is sponsored by the partner church Tahn-Ruti, Switzerland.

The soup kitchen is run only by volunteers from the church.



“John Wesley” Children’s Day Center - Dobrich

There are many orphanages in the country. There are very serious problems in the orphanages. The most worrying thing is that the children leave the orphanages with serious deformations in their psyche as well as in their character.

There is one more endangered group of children - those that are coming from disfunctioning families.

Often both parents are far away and the children are left under the care of their grandparents.

Such children are often in the street, cause problems and the social services are forced to send them to orphanages.



If they are helped, they have the chance!

“John Wesley” Children’s Day Center - Dobrich



Such children are being helped in our Center and are encouraged to attend school and prepare their lessons. They are also offered warm food and clothes.



Many of them attend Sunday school and are connected with the church.

Distribution of the Methodist Churches in Bulgaria



1990

Surviving churches - 3

Shumen

Russe

Hotantsa



2010

Restored churches - 10

Sofia

Botevgrad

Lovech

Sevlievo

Pleven

Vojvodovo

Svishtov

V.Turnovo

Varna

Varna-Armenian

Distribution of the Methodist Churches in Bulgaria

New churches – 18



Aksakovo

Trastikovo

Belene

Ugarchin

Dobrich

Tsenovo

D.Chiflik

Yambol

Ljaskovets

Russe- Armenian

Mizia

Burgas -Pobeda

Osenovo

Burgas-G.Ezerovo

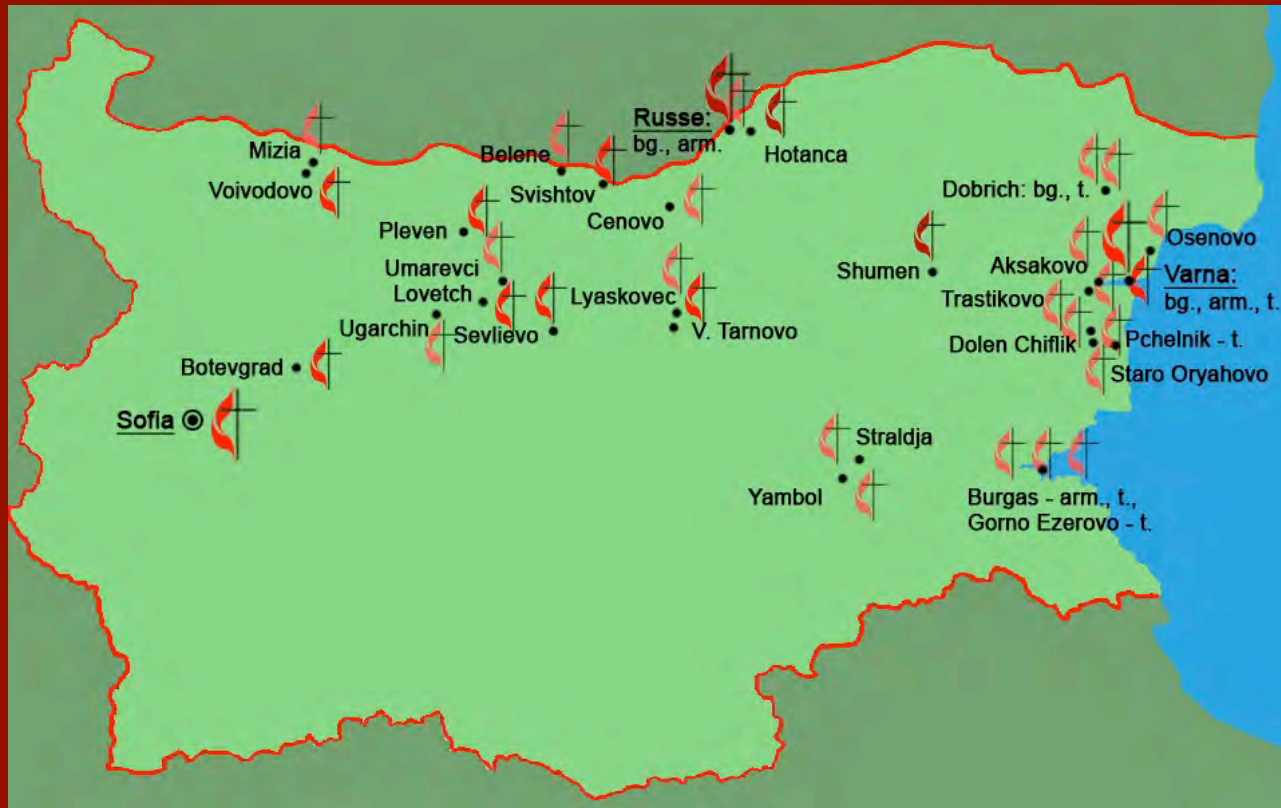
Straldzha

Varna-Turkish

St. Oriahovo

Dobrich – Turkish

Distribution of the Methodist Churches in Bulgaria



31 churches altogether

Home groups – 12

Churches that are no longer Methodist – 3

Our mission has reached more than 50 places

Churches that are not on the Map

Difficulties in our mission

After 1990 we made a good use of the opportunities to preach the Gospel. Communities were gathered in many places. Today many of them are established churches, but some did not make any progress.

The reason for all this is the lack of workers and material resources. The services were held by itinerant preachers. Sometimes, in the beginning, the enthusiasm of the evangelists and of the new converts exceeded our abilities. When the building project in Varna was suspended the efforts of the entire team were concentrated on preaching the Good News. 19 new congregations were established in the region during that period.

However, we were unable to provide salaries that would be sufficient to cover the modest needs of the preachers' families. It was especially difficult as far as the preachers from the minorities. We lost some of them though we had invested a lot in their training.

Difficulties in our mission

Sometimes it was too hard to maintain the cars and cover the expenses. However, the main reason was that we failed to encourage and train local lay-preachers and workers.

The common thing among those congregation was the fact that all of them had no buildings of their own. In our society having a building is a matter of acceptance and identity, while for the church members it is a matter of commitment and sacrifice.

Some of our communities were attracted by the big promises given by other churches: Burgas, Djulino, Varna-2.

Other congregations were reduced in number and were turned into house groups: Ressen, Strahilovo, Balchik, Provadija, Bozvelijsko, Staro selo, Dalgopol, Grozdevo, Trastenik, Umarevtsi, Pchelnik, Burgas-Armenian.

We have reached more than 50 places and we are convinced that good seeds have been planted there. We are simply the sowers, but Christ is the Master of harvest!

The Old Preserved Churches

Shumen – church and pastor's home



Church

Built in 1895

Plot 720 sq.m.

Built-in area 150 sq.m.

Spread out area 190 sq.m.

Pastor's home

Built-in area 100 sq.m.

Spread out area 200 sq.m.



The Old Preserved Churches

Russe – church and pastor's home



Church

Built in 1893

Plot 1160 sq.m.

Spread out
area 250 sq.m.



New part 80 sq.m.

Pastor's home

Built-in area 116 sq.m.

Spread out area-200 sq.m.

Shops:215 sq.m.

The Old Preserved Churches

Hotantsa Church

Built in 1927. Plot 720 sq.m.

Built-in area 150 sq.m.

Spread out area-190 sq.m.



Pastor's home

Built-in area-100 sq.m.

Spread out area-200 sq.m.





The church was taken away and was used as a rehearsal hall. The authorities had sent other church groups so that we could have no access to the building.

Returned Churches

Sofia - Dr. Long church



Church Built in 1922

Plot 720 sq.m.

Built-in area 320 sq.m.

Spread out area-980 sq.m.

4 dwellings--390 sq.m.

Returned Churches - Lovech



Church:

Built in 1935

Plot 720 sq.m.

Built-in area

245 sq.m.

Spread out area

580 ssq.m.



Pastor's home: 90 + 50 sq.m.

The church was taken away and was used for many years by the authorities as a disco hall and a rehearsal hall for a brass-band.

The church and the two homes were returned in very bad shape.

Returned Churches - Pleven



Church:
built in 1895
Plot 720sq.m.
Built - in
area 150sq.m.
Spread out
area-340 sq.m.



Pastor's house:
Built-in area-100 sq.m.
Spread out area-200 sq.m.

The building was
renovated with the help
of the partner churches
from Greensboro, NC
and Dunwoody, GA.

The church was taken away
and turned into a Puppet
theater. It was returned
after years of hard efforts.

Newly-built Churches

Staro Orjahovo



Built in 1999. Plot 520 sq.m.

Built-in area 90 sq.m.

Consists of: a hall, a Sunday School.
It is the first church of the minorities
to be built, with voluntary work.

Burgas-Pobeda

Built in 1998. Plot 362 sq.m.

Built-in area 80 sq.m.

Our brothers zealously started to
build a small church on a free plot in
a Gypsy district.

We gave funds for the purchase of
materials, the plot was bought later.



Newly-built Churches

Varna



Plot 510sq.m.

Built-in area 480 sq.m.

Spread out area 1735 sq.m.

Consists of: 8 levels: 3 halls, offices, living quarters, a Sunday School room, a kindergarten, a kitchen and other rooms.

The ground breaking was done by members of the World Methodist Council in 1992. Construction began in 1994; it was suspended several times. Funded through the Diocese, with sponsorship from partners, the Millennium Fund of the UMC, sponsors.

Dedicated in September 2002.

Newly-built Churches

Dobrich

Finished in 2003

Plot 548 sq.m.

Bought in 1997

Built-in area 115 sq.m.

Spread out area 230 sq.m.

Consists of: 2 halls,
office, a Sunday school
room, a kitchen.

Dedicated in 2003.



The only big church built entirely with voluntary work and a lot of enthusiasm by the congregation, with funds from the Diocese and the Conference.

Newly-built Churches

Vojvodovo



Finished in 2004. Plot 970 sq.m.
Built-in area 100 sq.m.

Built with funds from the
Conference.

A small building was addition-
ally built with help from partners
to be used for social purposes.

Osenovo

Finished in 2004. Built-in area
60 sq.m.: a hall, a kitchen.

The church is a donation from des-
cendants of two related Methodist
families who have gone through the
difficult years of destruction of the
Methodist church.



Newly-built Churches

Botevgrad



Finished in 2006

Plot 745 sq.m.

Built-in
area 170 sq.m.

Consists of:

2 halls, a
kitchen, an
office.

Our old church building in Botevgrad has been demolished. We are happy that a new church was built with the help of Connecting Congregations' partners from Weddington, NC.

Varna - Turkish



Built in 2007. Plot 300 sq.m.

Spread out area 200 sq.m.

Consists of: a hall, a Sunday School room, a kitchen, living quarters.

For years the Turkish congregation was in need of a church building. People often dispersed. We are grateful to the Connecting Congregations' partners from Mobile, AL.

Newly-built Churches

Dolni Chiflik

Veliko Turnovo

Built in 2008

Plot 520sq.m.

Plot 520 sq.m.

Spread out area — 300 sq.m.

Built-in area:

The old pastor's house was transformed into a modern church building. We are grateful to WEv. and all Conn. Congregations partners.

90sq.m.

Consists of:

2 halls,
a kitchen



For 12 years the congregation was faithfully waiting for a church to be built on their plot. We are grateful to the CC's partners from Hickory, TN for their love.

Newly-built Projekt

Social Center in Shumen

Finished in 2001

Plot 770 sq.m., 1997

Built-in area 290 sq.m.

Spread out area -
1000sq.m.

Consists of:

a canteen, a hospital,
a home for elderly people



The building project and all activities are sponsored by the Weiblingen united Methodist Church.

Trastikovo

Newly-built Churches

Finished in 2009

Plot: 520 sq.m. from 1995

Built-in area: 90 sq.m.

Consists of: 2 halls, a kitchen.

The beginning was very encouraging.
The church was accepted by all ethnic
groups in the village.

There were many promises for support,
but there were many disappointments too.
We are grateful to all our friends and to
the Connecting Congregations' partners
from Lakeland, FL.



New Properties - Houses, Reconstructed and Turned into Churches

Tsenovo

Bought in 1994

Renovated in 1998

Plot-1687 sq.m.

Built-in area-86 sq.m.

Spread out area 172 sq.m.

Consists of: a hall, a Sunday School room,
a kitchen, living quarters.



New Properties - Houses

Aksakovo

Mizija

Bought in 1999

Plot-626 sq.m.

Built-in area-104 sq.m.

Spread out area-120 sq.m.

Consists of: a hall, a Sunday
School room, a kitchen.



Bought in 1997

Renovated in 2003

Plot-595 sq.m.

Built-in area -110 sq.m.

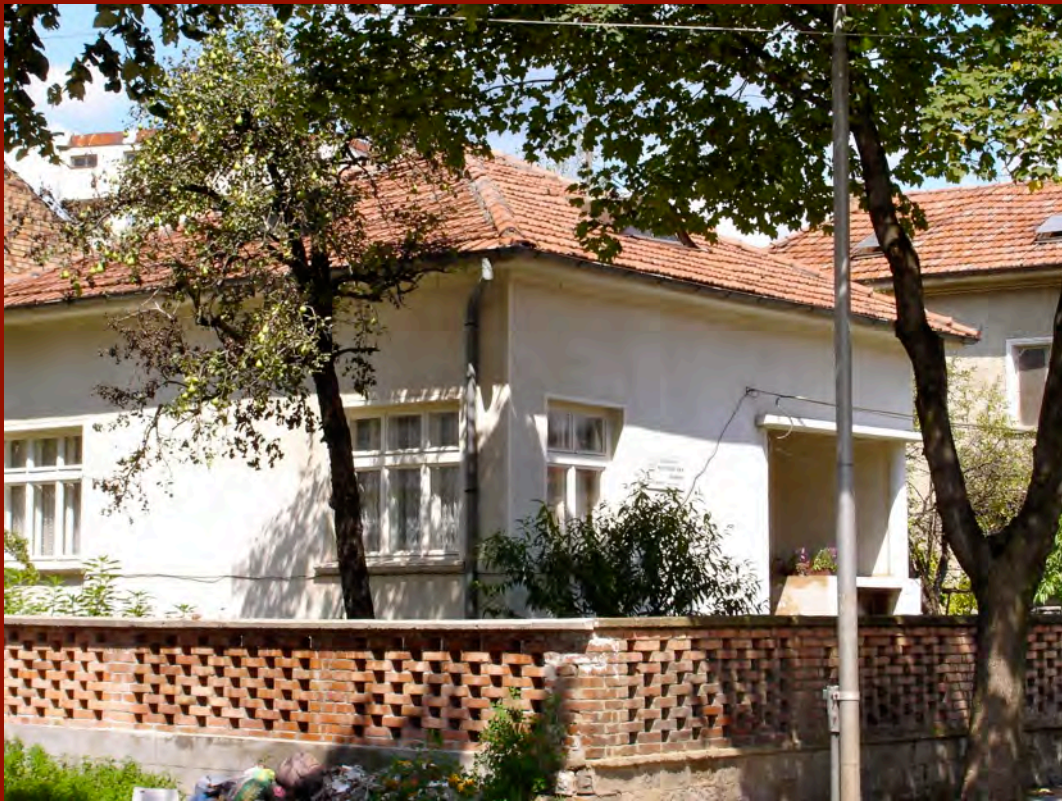
Consists of: a hall, a Sunday School
room, a kitchen



New Properties - Houses

Sevlievo

Ljaskovets



Bought in 2000

In need of complete renovation

Plot-425 sq.m.

Built-in area-210 sq.m.

Spread out area-410 sq.m.

Consists of: 3 halls, a Sunday School room, an office, garages.

Bought in 1999, Renovated in 2002

Plot-363 sq.m.

Built-in area-100 sq.m.

Spread out area-200 sq.m.

Consists of: a hall, a Sunday School room, an office, living quarters.



New Properties - Houses

Svishtov



Straldzha

Bought

in 2008

Plot-700 sq.m.

Built-in area

-250 sq.m.

Spread out
area-250 sq.m.

Consists of: 2 halls, a Sunday School.



Bought in 2007

Plot-361sq.m.

Built-in area-103 sq.m.

Spread out area-220 sq.m.

Yambol

Bought in 2009

Plot-327 sq.m.

House-70 sq.m.

Partially



Other Properties

Rented properties

Having restored the Bulgarian Methodist Church we put persistent efforts to get back the taken away properties and to set a program for their management.

- Two Pastor houses in Varna: Plot-536sq.m., Building's-258sq.m., 243sq.m.
- Two Apartments in Sofia:120sq.m. each, one-60sq.m.



- Shops: 2 in Sofia - 80 sq.m. each
- in Russe - 260 sq.m.
- Plots: Yambol-350sq.m., Podem-2310sq.m.
- Strahilovo-1963sq.m., Trastikovo-800sq.m.
- Grozdevo-400 sq.m.
- Bakery in Trastikovo-306 sq.m.
- Trastenik-600 sq.m.
- Fields: Hotanza-450 ares
- Vojvodovo-650 ares.

Can We Forsake Them?

We have minority congregations too. They live and work in a hostile environment, amongst innumerable injustices and severe social problems. They cannot be self-supporting. Their future worries us.



G.Ezerovo



Burgas



Varna

Can We Forsake Them?

We gratefully appreciate our “little” brothers. Their ministry and life are testimony for their faith in a difficult environment.



These churches are an “oasis” in the ghettos. They have an important mission.



Ecumenical Links of the Methodist Church

Christmas together!



The Methodist Church is always open for a dialogue with all churches and communities.

In Russe - celebrating Christmas together with the priests of the Orthodox, the Armenian and the Catholic churches.

Ecumenical Links of the Methodist Church

Visit of Pope John Paul II



Pope John Paul II is greeted by the Bulgarian Protestants:

“Welcome as our brother in Jesus Christ”.

He is presented with the new edition of the Bible, as a sign of gratitude for proclaiming both brothers, Cyril and Methodius, as “Europe's Patrons”

Ecumenical Links of the Methodist Church

Renovation of the Orthodox church in Hotantsa



After the renovation of the Methodist church, it was suggested by Bishop Bolleter that the near-by Orthodox church was to be renovated too, as a sign of gratitude for the close brotherly relations between both congregations during the difficult years of the past.

The Story of a Bell



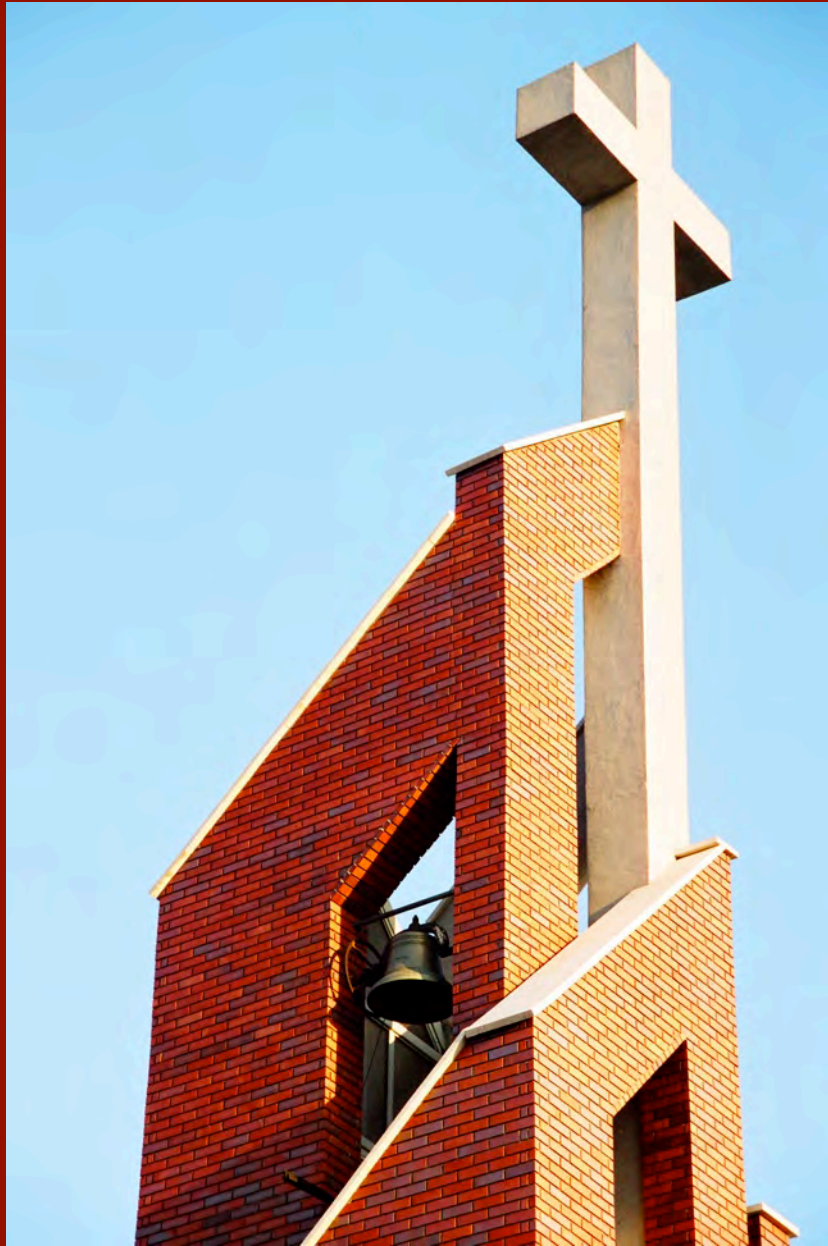
This is the bell which was given to the new Methodist church in Varna by the Baltimore Annual Conference in 1892.

At that year, 15 years ago, Bulgaria got free from 500 years of Ottoman slavery.

The new Methodist church is the only stone building in this town and the bell tower is a symbol of brotherhood with Methodists from the other part

of the world, who call each other brothers and sisters, something which was completely unfamiliar to our tortured nation.

The Story of a Bell



Our church was turned into a puppet theatre during the communist regime.

In 1970 the bell tower was pulled down. A few young people “stole” the bell and buried it under the ground because of fear.

It was long time before the bell was put high again and now it invites the people to services in the new Methodist church.

The heritage has been saved. The old bell is a part of our glorious past, which is built in our present and is a testimony of God’s grace and the methodists’ solidity all over the world. This inspires us to look at the future with hope.

The bell continues to ring for God’s glory!

Does the Methodist Church have a future?

In its 150-year history the Methodist Church in Bulgaria has gone through difficult times. Believers often thought that the fire in the sanctuary will die away. The future looked very dim.

In the beginning the intentions of the missionaries were to preach the Word of God in a language understandable to the Bulgarians.

We still have the calling to preach the Gospel to all of our brothers who are “weary and burdened”, to all who want to hear the truth.

People are eager to hear this message and we will always be successful as long as we are ready to share their worries and be close to them.



This is the cross of our church in the village of Trastikovo. It is situated on the road to the railway station - the only link between the village and the world.

For many that is the road to escape from the poverty and misery, from the difficult present and from the hopelessness of the uncertain future.

Our Methodist church is built along this road. It is a sign of hope and faith, in the expectation of a better future.

It is open from early morning and invites everyone to prayer and faith in God. Every evening it is lit till late for all who are in need of encouragement and hope.

We have a future as long as we wish to be close to the people, to all those who need our love along the road of faith in God!

Our future!

