

Sports in Mission Conference

On Friday evening and Saturday, November 20-21, 2010 the Free Christian Church of Budapest hosted the Evangelical Alliance Sports Network and three guest representatives from the International Sports Coalition. The purpose of the conference was to discuss different aspects of sports missions such as the current situation in sports missions around the world, what the Bible says about sports, and how to serve the people of sport.

Friday evening's program began with a talk from David Guehring, the head of Operation Mobilization's SportsLink ministry. David had us considering questions like: Is sport a good thing? Did God create sport? Why do Christians leave sport when they become Christians? Friday evening was a good time of getting to know the participants and thinking a bit about how sports can be a great opportunity for sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Saturday morning, thanks to the snow, saw a few less participants than the night before. However, the day was full of excellent information. Emanuela Traica, from Romania, shared about how to serve the people of sport. In today's society, sports people are high profile, influential, in leadership roles, and they make up a large percentage of the people. Emanuela shared that sports play an important role in many peoples' lives and that sports ministry is about speaking to people in a language they understand. For more information about this topic, please visit www.servingthepeopleofsport.net.

After lunch, participants had the opportunity to hear about what is happening in sports ministry in the country of Macedonia. Igor Netkovski, a worker with IntegrityAlphaOmega, a non-governmental organization that works with different sports, shared about several community competition events that have been organized in the last two years. It was very exciting for the participants to hear about how successful these ministries have been in Macedonia!

To end the day, participants spent time discussing two questions: How do we, in our ministry, sustain relationships with the unchurched? What can we do to help the church see the vision and potential of sports ministry? After spending some time discussing ideas the group came together to share. The group discussed the fact that many times, we do a big event that attracts a lot of people. We get their names and then try to get them to come to something that the church is doing. But people don't follow-up with the church because they do not care about it. It's important that we follow-up with the things people are interested in. Stay with what they care about and eventually their hearts will soften towards the things we care about (i.e. Christ). If we approach it in the opposite way they will feel tricked and their hearts will only become harder. For the second question the group decided that the best way to help the church get involved is to inform them about the results and/or goals of the sports activities. If the church is kept informed there will be more of a connection with the church. The people of the church also like to hear stories of successes in the ministry!

All in all, it was an excellent conference with a lot of good discussion. Networkers left the conference with new ideas and connections to help us continue moving forward in sports missions in Hungary.

In Christ,

Suzanne Cole