

A brief History of Christian Endeavor in Europe

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The first CE society in Europe was established in 1887 in Crewe, England. In the following years CE was started in various countries in Europe: Wales (1888), Ireland and France (1889), Switzerland and Germany (1894), Italy and Bulgaria (1896), Russia (1898), Hungary (1900), Portugal (1901). By 1902 CE was also present in Austria, Bohemia (now Czech Republic), Latvia, Sweden, Norway and Finland. In 1904 the European CE Union was organized in London and held its first European convention 1905 in Berlin. Other European conventions were held in Geneva (1906), Hamburg (1925), and Budapest (1927).

Since 2006 new attempts have been made to strengthen the cooperation of CE unions in Europe. In 2008 an international youth meeting "Connect Europe" was conducted.

Great Britain

The first Christian Endeavour society on the British Isles was formed in 1887 by the Rev. A W Potts at Hightown Congregational Church in Crewe, Cheshire. An engineer George Charnock had emigrated to America and as a result of his contact with the society at Portland, Maine he had written enthusiastically to his former minister about Christian Endeavour.

The first Convention was held at Crewe in 1891 when it was reported that there were 196 societies in existence in the UK. At the sixth convention held at Bristol in 1896 the Christian Endeavour Union of Great Britain and Ireland was formed. The Christian Endeavour Union of Great Britain and Ireland held annual Conventions every Pentecost weekend. These conventions continued, with exceptions during World War II years until 2002, when the English Union was formed and it was decided to hold a Great Britain and Ireland convention every fourth year.

The Christian Endeavour Union of Great Britain and Ireland has held a number of World Conventions. Recently a major project has been the provision of a Christian Endeavour website, www.ce-online.org, which links all of the activities and needs of the National Unions of England, Scotland and Ireland.



Wales

The first Welsh society was formed in Argyle Presbyterian Church, Swansea in 1888 and the National Union was formed in 1899 at Tredegar. Christian Endeavour was a major influence in the Welsh Revival of 1903/04 and there is a strong feeling that the revival started in a CE meeting. Rev. Francis Clark visited Wales on a number of occasions and he greatly enjoyed the wonderful singing at the Conventions and Rallies that he attended. The strength of the Welsh Revival and the work of the Christian Endeavour movement meant that CE was very strong in Wales for nearly one hundred years. It is very sad to see the decline in the work of CE in Wales. Currently the English Union looks after the interests of the Welsh Union which has only a few personal members and few societies.

Ireland

The first CE society in Ireland was started 1889 in Belfast. In 1894 the first Irish Convention was held and a year later the magazine "The Irish Endeavourer" was produced. The Irish CE Union was formed in 1897 with Rev. James D. Lamont as president. In 1966 the 15th World CE Convention was held in Belfast. Today there are about 100 CE groups (70 for children, 25 for young people, 5 for

seniors) meeting weekly. They are linked to Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist Churches. Camps for children, young people and young adults are held in summer and a national convention in September.

Scotland

In Scotland the first National CE Convention was held in 1897, and by the early 20th century there was a thriving work. Scotland has provided the World's CE Union with a President Rev. Jim Murdoch and two Vice-Presidents Dr. James Kelly and George Campbell. During the late '60s the main outreach was done by the Scottish Endeavour Singers, a 100 strong choir of Endeavourers and Leaders. In more recent times, numbers of societies and members have gradually declined. Today it is a small but active Union. In 2009 a CE Promotion Officer was employed to start new CE groups and Junior groups are encouraged to commence Young People groups for their juniors to transfer into.

England

Christian Endeavour English Union was formed in 2002 to meet the legal requirements for Charities and the needs of its members and societies. It was only in 2009 that it was able to obtain full separation and its own charitable status. Christian Endeavour English Union now has its own President, Trustees and Officers, and holds an Annual Convention at various venues within England.

Germany

The first CE society in Germany was started in 1894. CE was adopted as the youth branch of the pietistic fellowship movement (Gnadauer Verband), which were influenced by the evangelism and holiness movement from the USA and UK and spread rapidly at the end of the 19th century. God's tool to establish CE in Germany was Friedrich Blecher its first general secretary.



Tent Mission of German CE in the 1920s

The German CE Union was formed in 1903. A conflict with the Pentecostal movement shook CE in 1910, but it continued to expand rapidly until in the late 1920s. In 1926 the German CE Union had 1.482 local societies and 44.600 members. During the Hitler regime Christian youth ministry was limited to young people of 18 years and above and CE suffered from these restrictions and the effects of World War II.

In West-Germany CE was re-established after the war under the leadership of Rev. Arno Pagel. In the following years the national and state unions developed their ministries with programs for youth evangelism, camps and conventions, training for youth leaders and publications. Since the 1970s the number of local societies has been relatively stable between 600 and 800.

In the socialist East-Germany it was not possible to have CE as an organisation, but the youth work continued under the umbrella of the pietistic fellowships following the CE principles. It was possible to maintain contacts to the West-German CE and World's CE Union during this time. After the reunification of Germany in 1991, new state unions were formed and joined the German CE. Today the German CE is organized in 18 state unions with a total of 730 local societies (Internet: www.ec-jugend.de). Two members of the German CE have been serving as presidents of World's CE Union: Rev. Arno Pagel from 1974 to 1982 and Rev. Konrad Brandt from 1986 to 1994.

Hungary

The Hungarian CE was formed as a fruit of the spiritual awakening at the end of the 19th century. The first CE union (for girls) was formed in 1900 in Budapest. When Francis Clark visited Budapest in 1902 CE had already been well established. The Hungarian CE union (called Bethania society) was

formed in 1903 by Dr. Aladar Szabo and Dr. Istvan Kecskemethy. By 1905 the union had 16 societies and spread mainly in the reformed and Lutheran churches. A number of social welfare and evangelistic societies emerged from CE.

After World War I Hungary was divided and Transylvania became part of Romania. A separate CE union of ethnic Hungarians in Romania was formed.

During the 1930s and 1940s CE flourished in Hungary. From 1926 onwards annual youth conventions were conducted with increasing numbers of participants. In 1935 the CE World convention was held in Budapest with 2000 participants. After World War II Hungary experienced a revival. Many young people and adults found Christ during evangelistic outreaches. In 1948 the CE convention was attended by 3.000 young people. In 1950 this came to an end, when the Hungarian CE was dissolved by the socialist regime and its property was confiscated.

The Hungarian "Bethania CE Union" was newly founded by former CE members in 1990. In 1996 a conference centre has been established in Piliscsaba (northwest of Budapest). Summer camps and an annual convention are conducted. Presently there are two youth groups that meet regularly and a number of groups of senior Endeavorers. A Bible study guide is published in cooperation with the German CE.

Romania (Transylvania)

The roots of the Romanian CE are in Hungary. When Hungary was divided after World War I, Transylvania became part of Romania and a separate CE union of ethnic Hungarians was formed under the name "Living Christians". During World War II Endeavorers from Romania were able to participate in the Hungarian CE conventions. During this time the CE in Transylvania flourished.

In 1948 all religious organizations were suspended by the communist regime. The work of CE continued underground. In 1958 20 CE members were sentenced to 7 - 22 years of prison because of their faith and their families deported. They were released in 1964. Summer camps were conducted since 1972.

In 1991 the CE union was newly formed and registered with 520 members living in 54 towns and villages. Annual conventions are held since 1992 with 800 to 1000 participants.

CE in Transylvania is organized in four districts. In each district weekly meetings for children, youth and adults are conducted regularly. Besides this, there are other activities:

- Oradea district: social-Centre with Julia-Children's home and other activities; summer-Camps on two camp sites; Berea-Bible school (once per month); old people's home in Tinca.
- Tirgu Mures district: CE house (national EC office); Dorcas Children's home; marriage ministry; Buchin-campsite; CE-Basilea-Prodcom Ltd. (economic unit to support the other activities).
- Zaláu district: social work with children and senior citizens; CE Parmenas Ltd. (workshop and other economic activities).
- Cluj district: student ministry; Koinónia publisher (www.koinonia.ro).

Ukraine (Transcarpathia)

Transcarpathia is the most southwest part of the Ukraine, between the Carpathian mountains and the Hungarian border. Ethnic Hungarians are the largest minority in the area. The Reformed Church of Transcarpathia has roots in the Hungarian CE movement. The youth branch of the church (KRISZ) was formed in 2002 following CE principles and is a member of the World's CE Union. KRISZ reaches about 10.000 young people in local churches. Besides regular youth meetings, conventions and camps are conducted. Its centre (KRISZ-Pont) in Beregszász (Berehove) is used for student ministry, with a coffee bar and offices.



(Internet: www.reformatus.com.ua/lap/kriszpont).

Austria

Through protestant mission work around 1900 in the state of Carinthia (southern Austria) CE was established there. Today there are two CE societies with young people. They have a centre in the town of Seeboden which is used for regular meetings and camps. The CE in Austria is linked to the German CE union. (Internet: www.ec-jugendkreis.at)

Netherlands

In the Netherlands CE was introduced around 1908 by two Dutch reformed ministers. However there was strong opposition, which caused CE to remain small in the Netherlands. A local society was founded in Den Helder in 1911 and ten years later the National Union was incorporated. Before World War Two, the number of local societies was no more than 10, with less than 300 members. Only one of the societies was associated to a free Baptist Church. Although most CE members were from the reformed church, CE never rooted there due to opposition from other organisations. Several societies consisted of German girls, who worked as maids in the Netherlands. Johanna Bock a German deaconess and CE member, work with those girls in Amsterdam since 1935. She founded Dutch deaconess work, and the sisters actively supported CE work up to the late 1980's. For various reasons the few societies dwindle around that time. Today only the National Union is left, with a few members who support missionary CE projects abroad.

Croatia

In the town of Legrad in the North of Croatia a Lutheran pastor who came in contact with CE in Germany founded a CE society in 2001. The group is called OK - Odlučan za Krista (Croatian for "dedicated to Christ) and has 10 to 15 young people who meet for Bible study and prayer. They are involved in children's ministry, help in the church and organize special events such as concerts.

