

Lillian Coggan's visit to Sofia, Bulgaria
16-20 April 2009

This was our third visit to Sofia; what a difference there was from our last visit three years ago. We came into the new Terminal 2 at Sofia – vast and almost empty – unlike Terminal 5 at Heathrow!

There was snow on the mountains, blossom on the trees and plenty of sun! Teddi was there to meet us and as we drove into the city centre, there are many new buildings and a vast number of building cranes on the skyline. However, during our visit, in order to avoid the traffic jams which now plague Sofia (the number of cars on the road must have tripled?), Teddi drove us through numerous back roads and the dilapidated buildings in urgent need of repair are still very evident and in stark contrast with the new buildings on the main road.

On the Saturday we visited the new Social Centre being erected by Sofia Baptist Church. What a change from our original and interim visits! The services throughout the building – electricity, heating & cooling systems, together with the boiler, are all installed, as are the outlets for computers and internet connections and the riser cupboards are in place.

It was thrilling to see the glazing completed, especially the windows at the front of the building that form a cross which can be lit to be visible to many thousands of people in Sofia.

The entrance to the building now has its glass doors fitted and a marbled flooring lobby. The driveway down to the basement garage was stacked high with large bags of plaster and when we reached the fifth floor we saw the first room which has been plastered. Teddi was particularly pleased to tell us that he had negotiated a very good price for the plaster work – Bulgaria is also in recession, and as the plastering of the interior is a big job, it was a great advantage to be able to negotiate the price down. The plastering is done with a large gun and then hand finished so, now that it is underway, the progress should be rapid. Teddi showed us an enormous pile of doors which a craftsman has agreed to treat and hang.

Provided the funds continue to come in, it really won't be too many months before the project is complete. A further £430,000 is needed to complete everything.

Sofia Baptist Church has also altered a lot. It was encouraging to see the two Sunday morning services packed. Worship included an excellent young people's ensemble that play at some of the services and who certainly enhance the worship. Teddi now has his assistant, Radian, a very hard working young man who

also leads the ensemble, and it was great to see his wife Plamy working with him.

On Easter Sunday evening the various groups from the Sunday School gave performances – their proud parents and grandparents were present. Teddi made the comment that it was the first service in which he had played no part – I should add that Didi was working hard organising the children! The gypsy children, who attend the Church on Wednesdays for literacy classes, gave a wonderful performance and Teddi was amazed and thrilled to see their parents and others in Church.

We thoroughly enjoyed our visit and being able to celebrate Easter (our second this year) with Teddi, Didi, Amie and Sophie plus their family and the family of the Church; the evidence of the generosity of God's people was all around us.

[Make a donation](#) to the Bulgarian Partners' Trust today to help Sofia Baptist Church reach its target and finish the new Social, Medical and Training Centre, which will incorporate an education suite to encourage learning, a nutrition centre to offer daily meals, a medical centre offering subsidised care, a job centre to help people find work, and a church where people can meet and worship freely.