

A large, multi-story white building with a prominent central clock tower and a series of arched windows on the ground floor. The building is set on a grassy lawn with some bare bushes in the foreground. The sky is overcast.

CONTINENTAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

equipping

students to reach the world

By Charity Sites
Photography by Jess Heugel

ITS HUMBLE BEGINNING was in a stable. Now, in St. Pieters-Leeuw near Brussels, Belgium, Continental Theological Seminary ministers from a beautiful building amid a picturesque landscape. But while its surroundings have changed, it has never wavered from its purpose: to prepare men and women for Pentecostal ministry.

In more than 70 countries around the world, CTS graduates are ministering as pastors, teachers, evangelists, missionaries and church leaders. In at least 15 of those countries, CTS alumni have been named to serve in executive leadership or as Bible school directors.



“As I travel and visit places, I constantly find pastors and leaders who graduated from CTS,” says Dr. Joseph Dimitrov, CTS president. “This speaks a lot about the success of the initial vision that still goes on today.”

In 1959, Charles Greenaway and Alfred Amitie, a French-Belgian pastor, had a vision to train ministers, missionaries and evangelists in Europe by combining missions with education. A small group of students responded, and CTS was birthed. Now, 50 years later, it continues to carry out the vision of its founders by providing Pentecostal training for students from around the world. Since its beginning, the school has graduated more than 720 students to serve the Lord and His kingdom in various areas of ministry.

The Many Faces of CTS

One word — diversity — describes CTS and its ministry. Both the student body and the faculty represent as many as 30 nations and cultures. This diversity brings a vital international perspective to the school, giving students the opportunity to live and learn with people of many different backgrounds.

Students come from across Europe, as well as Asia, North and South America, and Africa. Because programs are offered in French, CTS draws many students from French-speaking countries.

“Many African churches and national movements prefer to send potential leaders to study in an international environment,” explains Dimitrov. “That way, the students will return better prepared and have a greater understanding of multiple cultures and perspectives.”





President Joseph Dimitrov and his wife, Iveta



A New Leader

As CTS grows, its international reach also continues to expand. This is significantly reflected by Dimitrov's recent appointment as president.

Born in Bulgaria, he grew up during the years of strict communism. Because he was a believer and ministered in a church context, he was somewhat ostracized. He attended Sofia Technical University in Sofia, the nation's capital, and earned bachelor's and master's degrees in mechanical science, specializing in intellectual property law.

A renowned scholar, he followed his secular education by receiving a bachelor's degree in Bible and theology and master's in theological studies from CTS. He then received his Ph.D. majoring in historical theology from the Evangelical Theological Faculty in Leuven, Belgium. He served

as head translator and general editor for the Bulgarian New Testament Open Bible, and currently serves as supervisor for the University of Wales-Bangor Ph.D. program offered at CTS, as well as president of Evangelical Theological University in Bulgaria. An accomplished author, he has written many articles that have been published in various theological journals. He and his wife, Iveta, have three children, Pavel, Carina and Benita.

Dimitrov has served on the CTS faculty for 14 years, and was named dean/vice president of education in 1999. Last year he was unanimously approved as president.

"Joseph Dimitrov is a spiritual giant," says Greg Mundis, regional director for Europe and chairman of the CTS board of directors. "He is humble, focused and committed to CTS, its mission statement and its goals."

A Fresh Vision

Along with the school's new leadership come new ideas and initiative. President Dimitrov describes the future of CTS as an "ever-growing vision." And while many changes have taken place within the last 10 years, more exciting developments are under way.

To broaden the academic program, leaders plan to implement several new academic degrees, including Christian counseling and Christian leadership — two degrees that are not generally offered in Europe, especially in Pentecostal Bible institutions.

"There is great potential in offering these degrees," says Dimitrov, "They will generate great interest from among European churches."

To increase opportunities for students to attend the school, leaders plan to expand beyond CTS' main campus location and establish centers throughout Europe.

"Because of its accreditation and validation with the University of Wales," explains Dimitrov, "CTS has the potential to look beyond our facilities and help local churches and Bible schools, being careful to respect their own particular interests."

To further develop student resources, an expansion of the school's learning center is being planned.

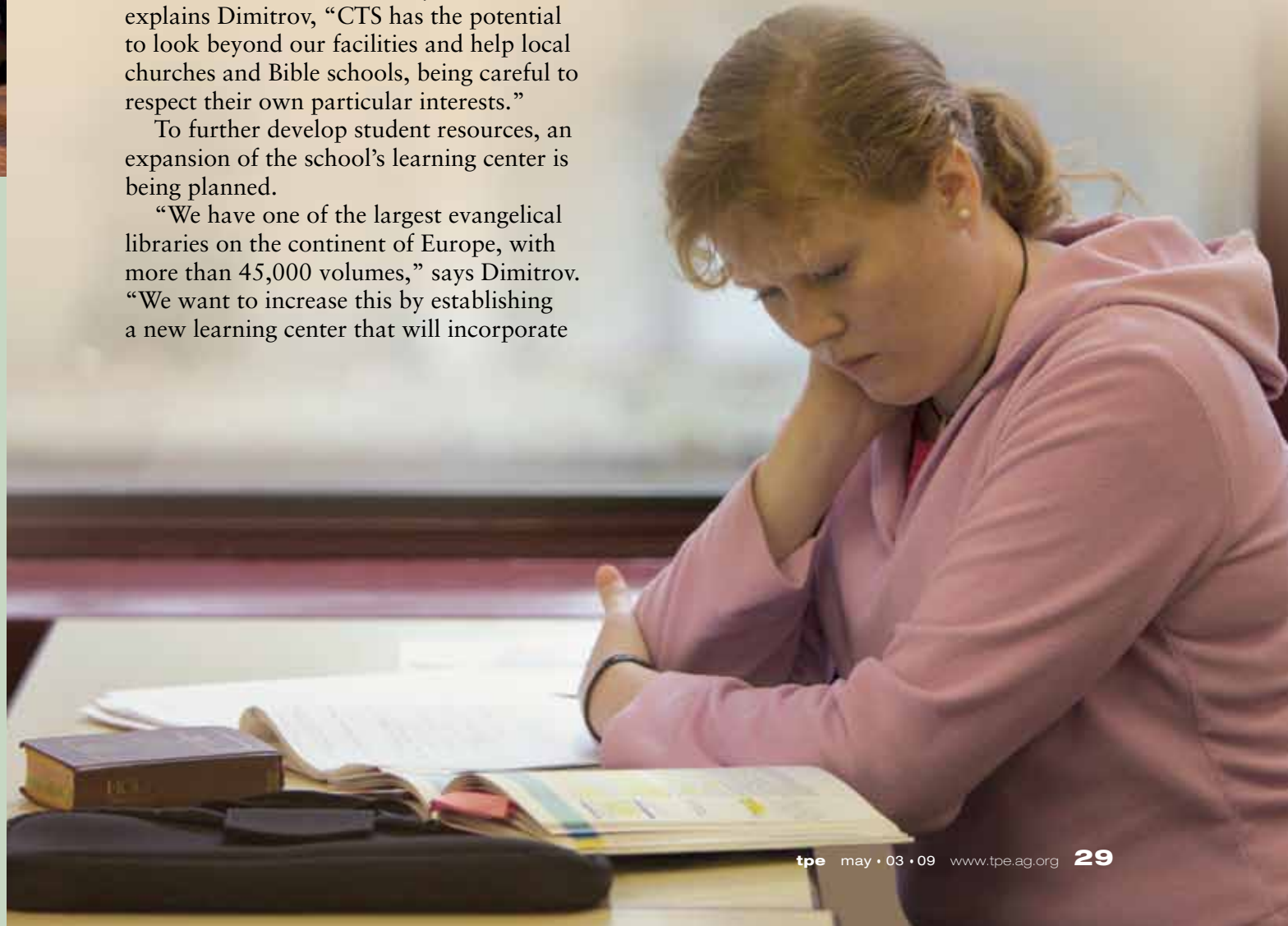
"We have one of the largest evangelical libraries on the continent of Europe, with more than 45,000 volumes," says Dimitrov. "We want to increase this by establishing a new learning center that will incorporate

the existing library's assets with information technology, making the school a center for advanced theological studies."

While the school considers and plans for several changes, its leaders are committed to continuing the "Europeanization" of the school. Initially, CTS focused on a strong "American" style of education. But during the last 10 years, the board has sought to increase the number of European teachers and administrative leaders, as well as adopt a format that is more European in scope. Continuing this process will bring the school closer to European churches and ministers.

"This is one of the reasons we want to establish learning centers outside of the CTS location," says Dimitrov. "It's all part of continuing the Europeanization process."

Through Dimitrov's leadership and the dedication of gifted faculty members, these goals will help CTS extend its reach in training leaders.



A Spirit-led Future

“No matter how much CTS grows and the vision develops, the original idea of combining missions and education will continue,” says Dimitrov. “CTS has been and will remain a ‘sending school’ — a Pentecostal learning center where training is primarily driven by a spiritual mandate and where the workshop for sharpening the tools is found in the midst of the harvest field.”

As CTS prepares to move into the future, its potential for influence and effectiveness has never been stronger. With a new leader, fresh vision and continued Spirit-led guidance, it will produce fruit that will help transform Europe and beyond. **tpe**

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